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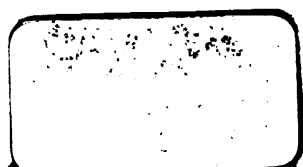
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ADAM BROWN,

THE MERCHANT.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF BRAMBLETYE HOUSE, &c.

Horatio Smith

IN THREE VOLUMES.



"When novelty's the rage, and love of change,
And things are doated on because they're strange,
How shall he fare whose un aspiring hack
Jogs on the broadway and the beaten track,
Leaps o'er no moral fence, nor dares to prance
In the wild regions of untried romance?"

CHARLES MOORE.

VOLUME I.

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ADAM BROWN.

CHAPTER I.

THOUGH the village of Woodcote, situated at the foot of the Cotswold Hills in Gloucestershire, could lay no claim to picturesque beauty, there was in its immediate vicinity one object which might interest a traveller, especially if he happened to be an antiquarian. This was the Manor-House, at a short distance from the village, on the road to Charlton Abbots. Originally a monastic building of considerable extent, it presented the usual incongruous aspect of such edifices when they have been partly pulled down, and partly rebuilt, and patched, and altered by successive owners, each more solicitous

of adopting modern conveniences and improvements than of conforming to the antiquated style of the original building.

The rambling structure bewildered the eye by a succession of varying gables, some originally decorated by projecting frames of richly carved oak, surmounted by crotched pinnacles crowned with a cross, most of which enrichments had crumbled away, or suffered defacement, from the corrosions of time. Even the monster-faced stone corbels, on which the woodwork had once rested, had lost some portion of their grim ugliness, their abraded and discoloured features now inspiring compassion rather than aversion, especially when the rain, escaping from the decayed spouts, fell like tear-drops from their furrowed faces.

A large Gothic window with heavy stone mullions branching into trefoil and quatrefoil divisions, which had once given light to the refectory, imparted to the principal gable an air of dignity but ill supported by its neighbours, whose projecting latticed casements, receding loopholes, or flat modern

windows, peered forth from the massive walls with a comparative meanness. Above the centre of the steep ponderous roof stood, or rather tottered, the remains of a wooden belfry, a portion of which had either crumbled to decay, or had been blown down in some unremembered storm. The spacious fish-ponds of the garden, which had once supplied piscatory delicacies to the monks during Lent, and probably at all other times, had been long filled up; though the old brickwork of their margins was still visible. A sun-dial, minus the brass plate and gnomon, retained its place between them; and a colossal pigeon-house of stone, spite of its manifest dilapidation, looked as if it would defy the final assaults of time for ages yet to come. Around the whole domain, which was of considerable extent, ran a massive wall of rough stones, fortified at regular intervals by solid buttresses.

After the death of its last occupant (a certain Lady Mayhew), the right to this venerable mansion had been contested by two claimants, by whose disputes the property

was ultimately thrown into Chancery, and, in spite of the sneers and sarcasms which have associated that court with the notion of an almost interminable delay, candour compels us to admit that the process in question did not extend much beyond the term of nineteen years. In vindication of its decisions, we must also record that, although a verdict was given in favour of the wrong party, the fortunate gainer of the suit, who had previously been in good circumstances, was completely ruined by its expense, so that there was a species of retributive justice even in its erroneous judgment.

The impoverished owner of the Manor-House now offered it for sale; but, as it had assumed, from neglect during the litigation, a most forlorn and desolate appearance, no purchaser had appeared until about three weeks previous to the commencement of our history; when it had been bought, not without much sharp and strenuous haggling, by Adam Brown, a retired merchant, who, after giving orders for the hasty preparation of such apartments as he meant immediately

to occupy, was expected to arrive and take possession of his new property on the afternoon which we are proceeding to describe.

Towards the latter end of autumn, the breezes which had tempered the heat of a sultry day had subsided into a dead calm ; the setting sun, shooting its rays in the direction of the Cheltenham high road, imparted an appearance of fiery smoke to the dust thrown up by a flock of sheep wending to their fold ; the tops of the Cotswold Hills, burnished by the rays, shone out distinctly against the sky, while their lower ranges already began to be wreathed with ascending vapours ; crows were making their heavy way back to the Manor-House rookery ; horses and labourers were plodding wearily home from plough ; cows, indolently whisking off the flies, were dawdling to their homestead ; not a cloud moved above, not a leaf below ; it seemed as if the sky and the earth, exhausted by the fervours of the day, languidly awaited its decline, that they might enjoy the cool repose of night.

From this general air of drowsy tranquil-

lity we must specially except that portion of the village which was in the immediate vicinity of the Green Man public-house and the bridge. Here there was an unusual assemblage of people, all animated by a rare curiosity and excitement, for on this spot a bonfire had been prepared to celebrate the arrival of the new Squire (as they termed the purchaser of the Manor-House), and here had a majority of the inhabitants been already waiting upwards of two hours, that they might have the first sight of the stranger and his equipage, and testify their respect for a village patron who was reported to be very wealthy, and who could hardly fail to benefit them by the large expenditure which his residence would occasion. Their impatience and eager anticipation had already led to one awkward mistake, for Jem Harris, an urchin stationed in the elm-tree that fronted the public-house, with orders to wave a flag as a signal to the bell-ringers at the church, mistook the dust of John Chubbs's market cart for that of the Squire's carriage, and by a hasty flourish of his flag occasioned a pre-

mature peal to be struck up,—an error of judgment for which he was rewarded with shouts of ironical laughter and a few indignant peltings from his fellow-playmates, intermixed with sarcastic inquiries of—“Who took old Chubbs’s cart for the Squire’s coach?” an unnecessary question, to which the sulky delinquent scorned to give any reply.

“Well,” said the village butcher, spinning his steel into the air, and expertly catching it as it descended, “he don’t mean to keep sheep I larn for sartain, so I shall have the killing of his mutton,—that’s one comfort.”

“And they do say,” added a half-starved barber, “that he wears a wig, which must be titivated now and then,—that’s another good thing.”

“Sure he won’t think of brewing his own beer?” said the brewer: “the vat up at the old Manor-House be all to pieces, and the mashing-tub too.” But the speaker forgot to add that this piece of mischief was his own covert handiwork.

“The Squire ’ll have good eyes,” wheezed

a fat laundress, "if he do find any washing-tubs fit for use:" a safe averment; for the worthy dame and her husband had purloined and fresh painted the best of them, on the plea that "what was in Chancery was everybody's right, and didn't belong to nobody."

"I warrant the Squire will bring down a smart young valet, and perhaps a couple of grooms," simpered the red-armed, fair-haired daughter of the last speaker.

"Well, minx, and what if he do?" sharply retorted the mother. "D'ye think them fine Lunnuners will have anything to say to the likes of you? Go home to your ironing, hussy!"

"La, mother, how cross you be!" muttered the wench, making a show of obeying the mandate, though she presently returned, and ensconced herself behind a tree, where she could see and not be seen.

"I say, Master Waghorn," hiccoughed fat Sam Belcher, as he finished his pot of porter, "don't ye think the Squire'll stop at the Half-way House, just to take a snack of bread and cheese and inguns, and a glass o' purl? I know I should."

"The Half-way House!" replied the indignant Boniface; "I should like to know what decent body, let alone a Squire and a rich man, would stop at such a low place as that! Like enough he may pull up at the Green Man. *Here* he wouldn't be pisoned at all events."

"I be glad o' the Squire's coming," growled the blacksmith, "acause I shall have the shoeing of his horses; and I dare say they'll want it often enough, if so be that the coachman and I be good friends. 'Taint on that account, for I baint selfish, not a bit on't; but acause his coming will sarve to keep the whole village alive like."

"And I baint no more selfish nor others," coughed the grave-digger; "but as to keeping the whole village alive—od's heart, Master Blow-bellows, sure they live long enough as it is. Devil a grave have I had the digging on for these three months."

"Here he comes! here he comes!" shouted a dozen eager voices at once, as dust was seen to arise at some distance along the road; but their expectations were quickly checked

by the boy in the tree calling out, "Hold your jabber, can't ye? it's old white-faced Dobbin, and the doctor's one-horsed chay."

"He a doctor!" muttered the grave-digger, with a scornful air; "we might as well have never a doctor at all, for he don't ever set the bell a tolling, at least hardly any to speak on. One has no luck now-a-days. There's no fever nor no influenzy a going on these hard times."

Leaving this rural conclave to pursue their speculations in the same disinterested spirit, we must advance a little along the Cheltenham road, and give our readers a short and hasty introduction to the party whose expected arrival had excited so profound a sensation at Woodcote. To adopt the style of the Newgate Calendar,—though we have a very different character to describe,—we will commence by stating that Adam Brown "was born of poor but honest parents in the parish of Woodcote," a fact which accounts for his selecting the Manor-House, deserted as it had long been, for his final place of residence. After passing through the suc-

cessive stages of a druggist's apprentice, a supercargo, and a merchant's clerk, both at London and Smyrna, he settled in the latter city, carried on business for many years on his own account, and accumulated a handsome fortune; when, finding his health affected by the influence of the climate, he gave up his commercial concerns, and returned to the British metropolis, where he intended to reside and enjoy himself during the remainder of his days.

This plan, however, being defeated by a recurrence of the asthma to which he had latterly been subject, he resolved to retire into the country, and pitched upon his birth-place, under the impression that his native air would be most likely to agree with his constitution. An almost uninterrupted success in all his undertakings, and a consciousness that he owed his advancement in life to his own unaided exertions, had inspired him with a confidence in his own judgment which sometimes manifested itself by a perverse and wilful opposition to the judgments of others. His peculiarities, however, we

shall leave to be developed in the progress of our story.

A sheer spirit of opposition, which often involved him in little embarrassments, had supplied him with a coachman whose chief merit was his unfitness for the situation. "All the world says I'm too old, and too deaf, and too stupid to be a coachman any longer," said the man, who wanted to be assisted in establishing a shop. "All the world lies," was the blunt reply; "and as nobody else will engage you, I will." With his man-servant, John Trotman, our merchant had been acquainted when there was much less difference in their respective situations, John having been junior mate in the merchant-ship in which his present master had made several voyages as supercargo. Hence there was a familiarity between them much more in accordance with former than with present relations, and utterly opposed to all the conventional usages that regulate the intercourse between master and man—at least in England. Though John had long quitted the sea-service, he retained

much of its blunt roughness ; his curt and captious, and sometimes impertinent manner, being rather assignable to an ignorance of proper respect than to a want of it. From his remarkable taciturnity—for he rarely spoke except in monosyllables—his messmates had bestowed upon him the nickname of Mumchance ; but though his tongue might be indolent, his features were active and expressive, while his eyes, ears, and limbs, made amends by their quickness for the dulness that was occasionally imputed to him on account of his unsociable silence.

But the most singular personage of the merchant's household was Mrs. Glossop, the housekeeper ; an office to which she had been appointed, with very liberal wages, as a reward for having most carefully nursed him during the severe fit of asthma, followed by an attack of influenza, which had finally determined his departure from London. For many years she had filled a similar situation in the family of his London partner, Mr. Gubbins, whose service she quitted solely because she declined accom-

panying him to Smyrna. Unfortunately, however, she *had* accompanied Mrs. Gubbins and her family to Paris, where they had resided for two or three months, in which interval she had picked up, by ear, a few French phrases, and delighted to interlard them with her discourse, rarely failing to introduce them with a curious infelicity, and generally vaunting her knowledge of the language when she was most unequivocally betraying her gross ignorance of it. As her ordinary English discourse might not seldom have authorized her to claim relationship with the Malaprop family, it may be surmised that her compound dialect was by no means of the purest *lingua franca*. Fat, fair, fonder of tawdry dress than quite became her situation, and, though verging towards fifty, still looking as if she were perfectly well aware that she had once been good-looking, Mrs. Glossop had received a very high character from her late mistress as "a bustling, honest, and respectable body."

With a housekeeper of such a discreet

age and unblemished reputation, Adam Brown, himself an old bachelor of sixty, might have felt himself justified in defying the breath of scandal, had he troubled his head about it; but thoughts of what the world might think, or say, or surmise as to his habits or proceedings, never entered into his mind. In the consciousness that no imputations could justly rest upon his own character, he sturdily scorned all the conventionalities of English society and manners, continuing to act, dress, talk, and smoke his *chibouque*, with the same perfect independence as when he followed his own whims and fancies at Smyrna. In accordance with this freedom, and perhaps under a vague notion that true gallantry has reference to the sex rather than to the rank of its object, he would not permit Mrs. Glossop to climb up into the dickey of the carriage when they started from London, but insisted on her taking a place inside, spite of her repeated exclamations of "*O mon doo*, Sir, *point de two*; I couldn't think of such a thing *toutafait*. It's quite entirely *hors de*

combat. Riding inside always gives me a violent *tout autre chose* in the head, and besides, Sir, I know my place better."

"And I know it better still," replied her master, pushing her in not very ceremoniously, and taking a seat beside her, when he amused himself with his companion for some time,—for he had a touch of waggyery in his composition,—by drawing out an account of her Parisian adventures, and laughing at her misplaced Gallicisms, though at other times her farrago would move his ire, and draw down an angry order "to leave off her cursed Frenchified gibberish, and speak English like a man."

There was both pride in the humility, and humility in the pride, of Adam Brown, who delighted in referring to his humble origin, and never testified so high an enjoyment of his present wealth as when it afforded a contrast to his former poverty. With this feeling he had ordered a pair of post-horses to be added to the carriage at the last stage, that his triumphal return to Woodcote might the more strikingly remind

himself, and perhaps others, of the miserable plight in which he had originally quitted it.

The rider of the hacks, a little wiry, wizened, bow-kneed figure, who had grown old and grey as a post-boy, had a pride of his own, and would have dashed through the village with an additional speed, had he not been arrested by the stentorian voice of the merchant, shouting out—"Hallo, you Sir! pull up at the Green Man;"—a mandate which was so suddenly obeyed, and with such a scuffling of horses' feet, that the vehicle became suddenly enveloped in a cloud of dust. The youngster in the tree, quite rejoiced to be right at last, had flourished his signal—the church-bells, a poor peal of five, one of which was cracked, were ringing out the crazy gladness of their welcome—the rustics collected at the corner of the Common had vociferously given the preconcerted three cheers, and had crowded round the carriage to have a peep at the Squire, when, on the clearing away of the dust, their stultified and bewildered look

attested their utter inability to determine which *was* the Squire. It couldn't be Mrs. Glossop inside; it couldn't be the dust-covered John Trotman in the rumble behind; it couldn't be the fat coachman, for he wore a livery;—a summary which left no other candidate for the vacant honour than our merchant, whose appearance was in antipodean opposition to all their preconceived notions of the Squirearchy.

A very broad-brimmed hat, meant to protect his eyes from the sun, only partially concealed his old-fashioned wig, which was furnished with cannon curls and a pig-tail. His cinnamon-coloured coat and waistcoat spoke of former days and exploded fashions; his nether garments, of the same hue, terminated at the knee, where they were met by mackerel silk stockings, losing themselves in nankin half-gaiters. Owing to the heat, he had unbuckled his stock, which he held in his left hand, while his right rested on a stout cane, supported by the foot-board.

Not of long continuance was the moon-

struck quandary of the spectators, Adam Brown soon establishing his own identity by calling out, as he leaned back over the carriage—"I say, Mrs. Glossop—I say, John Trotman—here we are at last—this is Woodcote—yonder's the church—above the trees to the left you may see the belfry atop o' the Manor-House—and yonder butcher's shop, but it was a grocer's then, is the cottage in which I was born. It's eight-and-forty—ay, near nine-and-forty years, since I left Woodcote—afoot, with a wallet at my back, and seven shillings and ninepence in my pocket ; and now I come back with four horses to my chariot and a *leetle*—yes, a *leetle* more than seven and ninepence in my pocket. What d'ye think o' that, hey? Ha! ha!"—The latter exclamation, rather an habitual mode of satisfactory self-assertion than a laugh, was usually accompanied by two confirmatory thumps of his cane, which on the present occasion sounded sharply against the foot-board.

Though the rustics could hardly believe their eyes, they could not distrust their ears,

and accordingly raised a new shout of "Long live the Squire!"

"Thank ye, thank ye," nodded the merchant smilingly; "but Squire me no Squires: I'm a British merchant,—at least I was one, and shall be always proud to be called one. Please to remember that, my good friends."

"Good friends, forsooth!" repeated Mrs. Glossop, as she turned up her nose at the smocked rustics and ragged urchins surrounding the carriage: "*ma foi!* this must surely be the *pollyshongs* and the *canal* of the place."

"Tut, woman!" cried her master, who had overheard the latter phrase; "there's no canal here—this is the brook that runs into the Chilt. I've bathed in it scores of times, and treacherous bathing it is when there's rain on the Cotswolds, though it's so quiet and so shallow now.—Hilloa—Green Man!—Landlord!—Master Waghorn."

"Here I am, Squire," replied the party thus lustily invoked, repeatedly bowing

very low, and smoothing down his bald pate.

“What’s the price of your ale?”

“Two shillings a gallon for the best double X from Gloucester.”

“And what’s the size of your casks?”

“Why, we do always keep that ale in eighteens, Squire.”

“And what discount do ye allow if a fellow orders a whole cask, and pays for it next morning?”

“Discount, Squire! I never heard tell o’ such a thing—I can’t bate a farden. I can hardly get salt to my porridge as it is.”

“But you get plenty of porridge to your salt, if I may judge by your paunch, Master Tunbelly. Well; if you can’t afford discount, I can’t afford double X.—What’s your next price?”

“Eighteenpenny—and prime stuff it be.”

“And if you were to roll a cask out of your cellar, and tap it beside the bonfire, d’ye think you could find customers for the whole eighteen gallons—free—gratis—for nothing?”

“Dear heart, Squire, to be sure I could, and twice as much. Ask Sam Belcher if I couldn’t. Why if the Sodger do come down from the farm, he could drink three gallons to his own cheek.”

“And who may the Sodger be?”

“Why, John Chubbs; we call he the Sodger, ’cause he’s an old Waterloo man.”

“I’ll have no such swilling, no drunkenness, Master Waghorn; but you may bundle out the cask with plenty of mugs, and set fire to the bonfire as soon as you like.” A general shout of “Long life to the Squire!” attested the popular sense of this order, while the landlord waddled back to the house, muttering, to himself, “Discount, indeed! what a shabby hound! Well, I couldn’t ha’ done sich a particular mean thing. Howsever, I’ll be up to him, for they shall have the eighteen I tapp’d last Wednesday: there’s not above three gallon drawn.”

It might have been thought that Adam Brown’s first act on entering the village would have been deemed sufficient for the

moment, but such was not the opinion of a little urchin, who, as he took no great interest in the ale, kept bawling most vociferously, "Please to remember the bonfire," until he drew forth the remark of "Well, it is a thumping bonfire, I confess. Where did you get all those boughs and sticks from?"

"We picked most on 'em from the Friar's Field," was the reply.

"The deuce you did! Why that's my field, you young rascal; and am I to give you money for destroying my hedges?"

"Please, Sir, there was one large gap already."

"And you have been kind enough to make a second. I won't give you a farthing, young scapegrace!" Whether he repented of this resolution as soon as he had formed it, or that he found it impossible to resist that love of wagghery to which we have alluded, we cannot say; but certain it is, that, as his eye fell upon a large puddle, occasioned by the emptying of some washerwoman's tubs, he tossed into it a handful of small silver,

calling out, "Well, well; there's something for the bonfire." Upwards of a dozen urchins were presently scrambling and rolling over each other in the muddy soap-suds, besmirching their clothes and faces in so ludicrous a manner that the author of the mischief shook his shoulders with a wheezing chuckle, which terminated in a cough; while Mrs. Glossop drew up the glass, and turned away her head distastefully, exclaiming, "*Vraiment*, I never saw such a set of *toutafait* petty blackguards! They don't seem to have the smallest notion of *à la bonne heure*; but what can one expect? *Sans doute*, they all come out of the Poor House; and I dare say every one of them boys is a nasty dirty little *sewer de charité*."

"John! you don't seem much pleased with the village," said the merchant to his man: "they are ringing the bells for my arrival—d'ye hear 'em?" An affirmative nod was the reply. "They make a pretty peal, don't they?" John shook his head, and muttered the words, "One of 'em cracked;" at the same time pointing to the

dust, which still settled upon the carriage, and shaking the flap of his coat with a somewhat impatient gesture, as if anxious to move on. "Well, John Trotman, you're right there," admitted his master, not in the least offended at his rudeness; "so drive on, coachman."

The postilion, who began to feel a thirsty apprehension that he might not be able to return to the green in time for the gratuitous ale, plied his whip, and the carriage drove off to the accompaniment of a still heartier cheer than that which had welcomed its arrival; and in a few minutes our merchant, swelling with a pride and satisfaction which were exhibited in sundry ejaculations of "Ha, ha!" and concurrent thumps of his cane, passed through the stone-seated porch, and planted his foot firmly and triumphantly upon the floor of his own mansion—the Manor-House.

CHAPTER II.

DOTTED around the green or common of Woodcote were several garden-enclosed houses, which presented an appearance of comparative gentility, when contrasted with the neighbouring shops and sheds. To the smallest and prettiest of these detached cottages we are about to introduce the reader, first drawing attention to the decorous manners and appropriate dress of the truly "neat-handed Phillis" who will hasten to open the door before the bell has ceased to tinkle, a quickness of admission never to be expected in large and many-lackeyed mansions.

Everything in the interior bespoke an almost fastidious neatness, with occasional evidences of elegance, checked in its display by manifestations of an ever-present and

rigorous economy, as if the accomplishments and tastes of the occupants maintained a constant struggle with narrowed circumstances. Pieces of worsted-work, equally exquisite in design and execution, were mounted in plain deal screens, coarsely manufactured and unskilfully painted, and against the wall, in glassless frames of a similar description, hung water-colour drawings of finished beauty. An old-fashioned but highly-polished harpsichord usurped an undue proportion of the small sitting-room, while the music-books, all of which were in manuscript, attested the singularly neat penmanship of their owner, as well as a vigilant avoidance of all unnecessary expense. The house throughout was in keeping with the room thus partly described, and even in the garden a penetrative eye might detect a similar character, nearly the whole space being occupied by neatly-kept herbs and vegetables, partially concealed by ornamental shrubs and tastefully disposed flower-beds.

The inmates seemed to be in perfect ac-

cordance with the cottage—Mrs. Latimer, its owner, always wearing the appearance of a lady, though she made her own garments from the very cheapest materials; while her twin *boys*, as she still called them, in spite of their having now grown up to be young men, by their personal comeliness graceful carriage, and courteous manners, presented an unconscious air of refinement, which might seem little warranted by the homely texture and unassuming fashion of their clothes.

“My dear boys,” said Mrs. Latimer, as she sat by the open window of the little parlour, while her eye rested on the shattered belfry that rose above the trees of the Manor-House, “my dear boys, two days have now elapsed since Mr. Brown’s arrival. I would not intrude sooner, because I thought he would be in all the bustle of putting things to rights, and Heaven knows he will have plenty to do in that way; but don’t you think that we ought to call and pay our respects to him this morning? He was a friend, you know, to your poor father.”

“ You mean that my father was a friend to him,” said Allan, the eldest of the twins, “ by recommending him as a clerk to the Smyrna house in which he became subsequently a junior partner, and finally its principal. In short, he owes his fortune to my father; methinks, therefore, it is his business to call upon us. He treated you with gross rudeness when he visited us some years ago, and until he apologizes for this want of common courtesy I for one have no wish to call upon him at all. As we don’t want his riches, why should we submit to his insults?”

“ Nay,” replied Walter, the brother of the last speaker, whose soft voice and beaming looks attested the affectionate gentleness of his nature; “ nay, his reproaches were not meant for insults. They did but express the disappointment of a kind-hearted but coarse-mannered man, because we declined his proffered benefits.”

“ Which were of a nature and extent,” added the mother, “ that showed his deep sense of your father’s former kindness to

him. Do not forget, my dear Allan, that he offered to place you in his counting-house at Smyrna, with a prospect of ultimately becoming his partner, and that he tendered to your brother's acceptance an Indian cadetship, of which he had taken no small trouble to procure the nomination. Regardless, perhaps culpably regardless, of your own interests, and of his angry and petulant expostulations, you refused his generous offers because you would not leave your poor invalid mother to end her days in solitude. Heaven grant that you may never live to repent it! and sure I am that I can never live long enough to show my gratitude for your kindness and attachment. I can only give you my blessing, dear boys, in return for the great sacrifice you have made."

She held out a hand to each of her sons, and a tear glistened in her eye as she felt the tender pressure of their returning embrace.

"Ours would have been the sacrifice," said Walter, "if Allan and I had been separated from each other, and had left you

all alone. Under such circumstances I should never have known a moment's happiness, whatever might have been my successes ; but I am always happy while we are living thus cosily together at Woodcote."

"So am I," cried Allan ; "and let me add that we are more independent, poor as we are, than if we were indebted to others for their unwelcome favours, or were enslaving ourselves to a pursuit or a profession."

"But though we may not accept favours," observed the mother, "we ought not to forget the kindness that prompts the offer of them ; and so I do hope, my dear Allan, that you will accompany your brother and myself to the Manor-House this morning."

"Well, mother, I will do whatever you wish. If *you* can forgive his rudeness, I have no right——"

"Nay, nay, Allan, there can be no rudeness, I repeat, where there is no intention to offend. Mr. Brown's manners were harsh, certainly, but his offers were most generous ; and you would not surely quarrel

with a proffered melon because its exterior was rough,—at least I'm sure *I* wouldn't."

"You, dear mother? why, you never quarrelled with anything in your life. I don't think you know how."

"And I am too old to learn," smiled the mother; "so let it be settled that we all pay our visit at one o'clock this morning:" a proposition to which her auditors assented by another affectionate squeeze of the hand.

The family of the Latimers formed indeed a little household of love and happiness, where no voice of discord was ever heard, no unexpressed feeling of dislike or discontent was ever cherished. Left a widow at an early age, and reduced, by the circumstances in which her husband died, from an easy competence to an exceedingly narrow though fixed income, she purchased a cottage at Woodcote, seeking no other solace and society than the companionship of her twin boys, to whom she was devotedly attached. Partly from motives of economy, partly because she could not bear to be separated from the objects of her love,

she educated them at home herself, instructing them in music and drawing, in which arts she was a proficient, and procuring occasional masters from Cheltenham for the more solid branches of tuition.

As might be expected from this system of domestic teaching, from their secluded mode of life, and the great restriction of their pecuniary means, they had grown up in an entire dependence upon each other and upon their home enjoyments, in much ignorance of the world, except such knowledge as could be obtained from books; and with a simplicity and purity of character which the young rakes who have been initiated in the premature vices of our public schools would term a pitiful effeminacy. For country sports the brothers had no predilection, and, even had they been addicted to such pursuits, they could not have incurred their expense, the whole of their spare means being devoted to the maintenance of a humble one-horse carriage for their mother, whose debility prevented her from walking, and who derived both health and amusement

from the little excursions in which she was thus enabled to indulge.

Allan, who was a proficient in drawing, and who played on the violoncello like a master, had not only a passionate taste, but a positive genius, for the arts, while he possessed literary talents of no mean order, although few opportunities for their development had hitherto occurred. Walter had sufficient taste for such accomplishments to render them a constant source of amusement; but his ardour was less intense, his success decidedly inferior,—a fact which no one was so ready to acknowledge as himself. Incongruous as it may sound, he had moreover a turn for mechanics, and was the amateur carpenter of the family, his good will rather than his good workmanship being evidenced by the unprofessional-looking frames of which mention has been made. Neither of the brothers disdained the humble occupations to which their straitened finances occasionally consigned them, both acting as gardeners, and both looking after the horse and carriage, with half a day's assistance,

now and then, of a stable-boy from the Green Man.

In so ostentatious a country as England, where appearances are deemed all-important, and horses and carriages are kept quite as much for purposes of display as of utility, Mrs. Latimer's equipage would be stigmatized by a fashionable spectator as a most sorry and disreputable affair, a miserable attempt, in which any person making the smallest pretensions would blush to be seen. The little chariot had once done duty as a fly at Cheltenham; the low-sized and low-priced horse, although in good condition, seemed to have derived very little benefit from his grooming; and the harness had been rubbed until the plating had disappeared. Yet this forlorn "turn-out," which was in almost daily requisition, had been a constant source of health and gratification to the widow and her sons. Ignorant of the real motive with which it was kept, the villagers sneeringly proclaimed, as it passed, that there was nothing they despised so

much as a union of pride and poverty, ridiculing it accordingly as an inconsistent attempt; and although the Latimer family gave away in charity quite as much as their humble means would allow, it was often observed that, if they were only to lay down their paltry attempt at an equipage, they would be enabled to do much more for their poorer neighbours.

Nor did the rich always allow this four-wheeled delinquent to pass with impunity. Whenever, in their drives towards Cheltenham, its owners encountered the visitants of that city in their luxurious well-appointed britchskas, it provoked a contemptuous or compassionate smile, an expression much more offensively marked in the aristocracy of wealth than in the real nobility of the land, who, if they shared the feeling at all, were generally polite enough to restrain its exhibition; but in all instances these disdainful notices were met by a look of beaming good humour, as if the trio had rejoined, "We are quite aware that ours is a sorry

equipage, but we cannot afford a better ; it answers our purpose, and we are very thankful to have it."

This all-condemned fly—for the family never gave it any more exalted appellation—having been got ready by the joint assistance of the brothers, was driven to the door by Allan, its usual charioteer, when Walter handed in his mother, took his seat by her side, pulled up the step by a little mechanical contrivance of his own, shut the door, and the party drove off to the Manor-House. Short as was the distance, the anxious Mrs. Latimer twice let down the front glass to caution her eldest son against giving any unnecessary offence to Mr. Brown, observing to Walter, in a low voice, "Allan is apt to be hasty and impetuous, and, though his temper is the finest in the world, except, perhaps, yours, my dear boy, he is extremely sensitive, particularly where he thinks any slight has been offered to those whom he loves. He has a high sense of independence, and I would have him preserve it, as he well may, for, thank God ! we

already possess everything we could wish in the world; but I cannot bear bickerings, or even coldness and estrangement; and as Mr. Brown is to be our permanent neighbour, I should wish him to be our friend. I need not caution *you*, dear Walter, for, though you have as much proper pride as your brother, you are too gentle and kind-hearted either to give or to take offence without good cause."

"And so is Allan," was the prompt reply. "Hasty he may be when his feelings are hurt, but where will you find a milder disposition or a more affectionate fellow? When did you ever know him——?"

"Nay, nay," interposed the mother, "I am not finding fault with him,—indeed, he never gave me occasion, nor you either; bless you both! and it is a delight to see you as fond of each other as you are of me; and I often think that I am not sufficiently grateful, either to you or to Heaven, for being such a happy mother." Walter maintained that nobody else would think so, and in this endearing strain, which was indeed

the general character of their conversation, they arrived at the Manor-House.

As the little horse was much more rough than ready, and, so far from volunteering a start, never began one without much verbal coaxing, the driver being chary of the whip, Allan got down from the box, and rang the gate-bell, a summons which seemed to awaken nothing but its own echoes. After a pretty long interval, which the gentle Walter and his mother expressed a vain wish to prolong, Allan repeated the application with a vigour that attested some degree of impatience, but which was attended with no better success; and he was on the point of sounding a third alarum, when John Trotman, whose shirt-sleeves and heated appearance showed that his delay did not arise from idleness, walked deliberately up, pointing to the latch as he approached, and pronouncing, in a quiet respectful voice, the word "Open;" as much as to say, "Why don't you drive in? the gates are only on the latch." They were now swung back, creaking shrilly on their rusty hinges; the

carriage was driven through a most disordered lawn, littered with lumber of all sorts, to the porch, where they again had to await the arrival of John, who ushered them into a large but low gloomy parlour, in a state scarcely less disordered than that of the lawn. "Send master if find him," said John, who never threw away a single word that could possibly be spared. To judge by the time that elapsed before he presented himself, the difficulty of finding the master of the mansion must have been much greater than could have been anticipated; but he at length bustled into the room, struggling to get into his coat, and, without making any apology for the long delay, hurried up to the lady, exclaiming, as he long and cordially shook both her hands, "Ah! my good friend, Mrs. Latimer, right glad to see you. Well, now, this is kind and hearty of you to come so soon; but I should have beaten up *your* quarters to-day if you hadn't called, for I hope we shall be kind and loving neighbours. Let us have a peep at your nice, quiet, lady-like face," he continued, leading

her towards the window. "Eh! what! well, it can't be helped, but old daddy Time hasn't forgotten you, I see. It's rude to say so, I suppose, but I never tell lies. And are these your boys? Ods bobs! what fine, handsome young fellows they have become! I oughtn't to say so to their faces, I suppose, but why shouldn't I say what I think? I hate a silent lie as much as a spoken one."

With these words he gave each a hearty shake of the hand, and then added, "Well, lads! I hope we shall be good friends, and that you will often come to the Manor-House; but I do trust you are not such milk-sops and molly-coddles as you used to be, though that's your mother's fault, for she always tied you both to her apron-string. Why, when you were youngsters, as I've heard tell, she wouldn't let you climb trees for birds' nests, lest you should tumble down and crack your crown."

"We have every reason to be grateful to our mother for the manner in which she has brought us up," cried Allan, rather proudly.

"It was not so much my fear of their falling," said Mrs. Latimer, "as my objection to their acquiring when young a habit of cruelty which might have grown up with them. How could you expect a fond mother like myself to encourage them in robbing other mothers of their young?"

"Well, well, there's no disputing about tastes, but for my part they always seemed to me to look like a couple of great girls, when I saw Walter strumming at the harpsichord and Allan scraping away at the tall big fiddle—I forget what you call it; but there's no accounting for tastes, as I said before, and least of all for yours when you wouldn't let them accept the offers I made to provide for them both on my last visit to England."

"Indeed, sir, it was entirely their own choice, not mine," observed the mother.

"And one which I have never for a single moment repented," said Allan.

"Nor I either," added the brother.

"And that, boys, is the strangest taste of all," replied the merchant. "They may

well say wonders will never cease. Why, look ye, Allan. If you had gone back with me to Smyrna, I should have stipulated that you should be taken in as a younger partner when I retired from business. If you, Walter, had gone to India, I should have got you recommendations that could not fail to push you forward. And thus in fifteen or twenty years you might both have returned as rich as I am, or richer, though I have *rather* more than seven and ninepence in my pocket."

"And what should we have done then?" inquired Allan.

"Done! why, you might have settled down quietly at Woodcote with your good mother, and have enjoyed yourselves, and been all as happy together as the day's long."

"That's exactly what we are now, and without any of the trouble of going abroad," rejoined Allan: a reply at which the merchant appeared to be a little surprised and staggered, for he did not like to hear any one question the advantages of wealth.

"And who knows that we *should* have

found our dear mother at our return?" demanded Walter.

"Ay, and who knows," cried the mother with a slight shudder, "whether one or both of my darling boys might not have fallen a sacrifice to the climate, and have *never* returned?"

"Well, and if they hadn't, I warrant they would have died worth money. Don't you call *that* something? Ha! ha!" Two sharp raps of his cane attested his own conviction that such an Euthanasia would be rather enviable than otherwise.

"Be assured, sir," pursued the widow, "that we are none of us the less sensible of your intended kindness. Let us hope that everything is for the best. We are all quite satisfied with our present fortunes and prospects, nay, most grateful for them. We are all, I am sure, most happy to have you as a neighbour, and I am now doubly glad that we were in some degree enabled to protect the Manor-House from pilferage and mischief."

"You! why, you didn't know I was going to buy it?"

“No, indeed ; but for some years past it has been shut up and left to take care of itself ; and when it was understood to be in Chancery, some broke the windows, and some damaged the fences, while others broke into the out-buildings and began to carry off whatever was portable. Now, a house without an owner or protector, instead of being a public prey, as our rustic neighbours seemed to think, appeared to us rather like an orphan child, which has a kind of claim to everybody’s good offices ; so my son Walter, who is a bit of a carpenter, set to work and repaired things as well as he could ; and Allan stuck up a threatening notice against depredators, and seized one or two of the trespassers, though he let them off on their promise of discontinuing their petty pilferings ; and I went round among the neighbours, and persuaded some, and frightened others ; so that we managed to keep the place a little to rights, though I fear it has been damaged and plundered in spite of all our exertions.”

“And a neighbourly act it was, and an honest act; and I feel much obliged to you all, my good friends.”

“You have no cause, for we never dreamt of your purchasing the Manor-House estate.”

“True, true; and after all it makes no difference to me, for I shouldn’t have given so much for it if the place had been in better order. Trotman, and coachman, and Mrs. Glossop, and half a dozen others, have been running to me all day, crying out, this roof leaks, and that door is off its hinges, and those windows are broken, and these floors are rotten; but what then? I told the London lawyer, who had the sale of the property, and who was too gouty to come down and look into its real state, that *all* the roofs leaked, *all* the doors were off their hinges, *all* the windows broken, and *all* the floors rotten; and I so bamboozled old Swell-foot, that I got the place at my own price. I tell you what, Mrs. Latimer; I don’t lay claim to much learning, for I have had very little education, but he that would beat me

in a bargain must come from the far north, and rise uncommon early in the morning. Ha ! ha !”

“ You will have plenty to do before you are comfortably settled,” said the widow, declining to notice, since she could not quite approve, his crafty cleverness.

“ So much the better, so much the better ; I have nothing *else* to do. I wouldn't have bought this old ramshackle place if it had not supplied me with plenty of occupation, for I hate idleness.”

Allan and his brother, both of whom had been conciliated by the kindness and cordiality of the merchant's reception in spite of his bluff manners, tendered their good offices and assistance whenever they could be rendered available towards putting the house and grounds in better plight ; an offer which was instantly accepted with a hearty shaking of the hand, and the visitants had risen to take their departure, when their new neighbour suddenly exclaimed, “ Ad-zooks ! I had nearly forgotten to tell you, my good Mrs. Latimer, that I have taken the

liberty of ordering a new cabinet piano to be sent to your cottage, because I observed that your old-fashioned harpsichord, squaring its elbows at you the moment a fellow opened the door, hardly left room in your little parlour to swing a cat in. Though I myself don't know a piano from a hurdygurdy, I made them try several before me; I pitched upon the loudest, which I suppose must be the best; and I desired them to send down lots of the new opera music, all Italian, because I know you and your boys prefer it, though I must say I think it would be much more sensible and manly to sing English. And I have moreover bought—nay, nay, you sha'n't say a word till you have heard me out—I have bought for you and my young friends here a famous brown cob for your little carriage, as your present Rozinante is evidently on his last legs, and the cob, who will do either to ride or drive, will enable you to make longer excursions, and pull you better up the hills, so that you may see a little more of the country.—Now, don't open your mouth, Allan, nor you either,

Mr. Walter, for I haven't done yet. These are not gifts to you nor to your mother; in fact, they are not gifts at all, but a first dividend, and a very small one too, in repayment of the debt of gratitude that I owe to your father, as good a fellow as ever lived. Ah! if he had taken my advice, he would never have embarked in that fatal speculation which went all wrong, and cut up his health and broke his back."

"Alas! it broke his heart," sighed the widow, turning aside her head to conceal an unbidden tear, and taking refuge in a cough, as her broken voice would not allow her to express her gratitude. Allan and Walter, perceiving her emotion, would fain have conveyed their own sense of the merchant's kindness, but he stopped their mouth by abruptly exclaiming, "Stuff and nonsense! don't make any fuss because I want to get out of debt. Give me time, and I'll pay you all. Do you expect Adam Brown to forget the old friend who first gave him a start in the world? If you do, you'll find yourselves deucedly mistaken, and so I tell

you. I am not that sort of chap. Ha ! ha !” With these words he started up, and accompanied his visitants to the porch, apprising them that they must find their own way out, as John Trotman was much too busy to attend them, adding that for his own part he hated to have lackeys always running after him, as if he couldn’t open a door for himself.

Unassuming and humble-spirited as she was, the widow did not scruple to assert, or rather to insinuate her sagacity when she found her judgment confirmed or her predictions verified. On their way home, therefore, and during the remainder of the day, she took frequent occasion to remind her sons that she had always maintained Mr. Brown to be a most generous and kind-hearted man, however unpolished ; that she had stoutly vindicated him from any intention of giving offence on a former occasion ; that she was the first to counsel the present visit, which had already procured for them a new piano and a new horse, both of which were grievously wanted, and which might

eventually lead to much more important benefits. Allan, whose quick feelings sometimes drove him into extremes, and who felt that he had been somewhat unjust in his estimate of their new neighbour, was now vehement in his praise, adding, after a reverie of two or three minutes' duration, "I think I have heard you say, dear mother, that Mr. Brown was never married, and that he has no nearer relation than a good-for-nothing nephew."

"To whom, boys, I caution you never to make reference, for he is a man of such bad character that his uncle has been obliged to repudiate and disown him, and I did hear that the young man, being unable to show his face in this country, had run away to America, or somewhere beyond seas."

"But Mr. Brown," resumed Allan inquiringly, "must leave his money to some one, and who can have a better claim than the family of the friend to whom, by his own confession, he was mainly indebted for the acquisition of his fortune?"

“For my part,” observed Walter, “I should look with dread upon any change: it could hardly be for the better, when we are all so happy in our present plight. If mother wished it indeed,—”

“Not I, my dear, unless upon your account and your brother’s.”

“Is it worth while,” asked Allan, with a smile, “to discuss the question any longer, considering that it is a contingency which may never arise?”

“Well, well, Walter; if we are not likely to have castles upon the earth, we have the better excuse for building them in the air.”

“In the mean time,” was the reply, “here we are at our dear little cottage, which is a thousand times better than any castle, either on earth or in the air.”

CHAPTER III.

NEARLY opposite to Mrs. Latimer's, across the green, stood a larger cottage, of more external pretension, but of much less real neatness and comfort. The door and window-sills, as well as the lattice-work for trailing plants, were painted of a gaudy colour, while the damaged roof, cracked panes of glass, and neglected aspect of the whole building, indicated great slovenliness or a stern parsimony on the part of its occupants. An awkward and dirty young rustic, dubbed with the title of a page, in virtue of a shabby jacket bespattered with showy buttons, ushered visitants into what was termed the drawing-room, where they could hardly fail to recall the fable of the frog and the ox, everything betraying the attempt of

a little fortune to assume the display and swell itself into the dimensions of a large one.

Cheap engravings in flaring frames hung against the walls to conceal the torn paper ; the once tawdry furniture had become forlorn and decayed ; the worn-out carpet hardly presented the ghost of its original pattern ; the rickety chairs had lost the gilding, while the faded curtains retained the dust, of former days : but, on the other hand, a large coat of arms emblazoned upon vellum, and suspended over the chimney, preserved the freshness of its glaring colours ; and a plated waiter, engraved with the same armorial bearings, and placed upright upon a narrow side-table, still retained a portion of its pristine polish. A harp, wrapped in an old green baize cover to hide its disfurnished state, stood in one corner of the room ; a guitar reclined in a second ; a fowling-piece, shot-belt, and powder-flask sometimes occupied the third ; and the fourth was not unfrequently usurped by a lean pointer, gnawing a bone. Literary tastes, such as

they were, claimed fellowship with the incongruous articles we have been describing, the table in the centre of the apartment being usually supplied with an old number of the *Sporting Magazine*, and a well-thumbed novel, or book of fashion, from the Circulating Library.

This inconsistent union of poverty and pretension was in the occupation of Captain Charles Sullivan Molloy, a gentleman of no small consequence in Ireland, if we might implicitly believe a large engraving suspended in the most conspicuous part of the drawing-room, presenting a view of a stately mansion in the midst of a deer-stocked park, and bearing the following inscription : “Clognakilty House, County Down, Ireland, the seat of C. S. Molloy, Esq.” But this was one of those cases in which it is perilous to believe even ocular evidence, the mansion in question being the property of a very distant connection, the initials of whose Christian names had been carefully scratched out to make room for those of the pretended proprietor, who had purchased the print

for the express purpose of imposing upon his English friends and neighbours. This pitiful forgery being sufficient to afford a general insight into the boastful and unscrupulous character of the Captain, we shall for the present content ourselves with adding that he was a widower, and that, after having wasted in extravagant living the small fortune brought to him by his wife, he had retired with two daughters and an orphan grandson to Woodcote, having very little more than his half-pay to support his family, and endeavouring to varnish over his reduced and embarrassed circumstances by pomposity, boasting, and pretension. His personal appearance was not altogether inconsistent with his worldly plight, his once handsome features betraying the touches of decay, and the fine head of hair which had been the glory of former days having been succeeded by a bald forehead ; but his figure was still imposing, and he walked and talked with a strut and a swagger that seemed to defy both time and fortune.

Matilda, his eldest daughter, who sometimes confessed in a confidential whisper to particular friends that she would be five-and-twenty next birthday, though she might safely have added six or seven years to the score, was a showy, bold-looking, forward girl, whose free and easy manner was meant to excite admiration as a youthful exuberance; and whose tawdry low-priced finery passed muster with the rustics for a fashionable elegance. While her father's fortune lasted she had been paraded to various places of public resort in the hope of obtaining an advantageous settlement, but her own undisguised advances had rendered the hook so palpable, that she had not succeeded even in obtaining a nibble from a gudgeon. The flutterers and dangles who usually hover around a handsome and accessible girl were afraid of compromising themselves with a manifest husband-hunter, who seemed ready to construe everything into an offer, and whose father was reputed a dead shot. Boastful and unscrupulous, she resembled in many respects the magni-

loquent Captain, whose mendacious averments as to their former grandeur she hesitated not to support; in return for which accommodation he stoutly corroborated her little fiction touching the *anno domini* of her birth.

In figure and features, allowing for a difference of twelve years in their respective ages, Ellen, the second daughter, resembled her sister; yet this did not extend beyond a slight family likeness, so totally dissimilar was the soft and pensive, not to say the dejected, expression of her face; so different were her modest, unobtrusive manners; so wholly opposite her quiet and guarded demeanour. Nor did she less signally vary from her sister in mind than in externals and deportment, being fond of domestic retirement amid books and music; conscientiously averse from falsehood even in trifles; of a spirit naturally humble, and still further depressed by a knowledge of her father's impoverished circumstances, which awakened a constant fear that his pecuniary difficulties might soon reduce

them to a still lower grade. Fate had, indeed, placed her in a position uncongenial to her nature,—a misfortune that might well explain the pensiveness to which we have alluded; yet was it manifest that some feeling of still nearer and more tender concernment contributed to weigh down her heart, and imparted an additional plain-tiveness to her soft meek voice.

Valentine, the grandson, was a spoiled child and a Little Pickle, whose mischievous pranks afforded infinite amusement to the Captain, unless he himself happened to be their object, when his glee was quickly converted into wrath; but, as he might be called a good-tempered man, so far as an ease-loving indifference may deserve the term, his angry moods were generally evanescent. In fact, he was proud of his grandson, on account of his singular beauty, although he had more tricks than a monkey, more malicious freaks than any elf, sprite, or goblin that ever was portrayed. Historians as well as writers of fiction, from the days of Richard the Third to those in which Caliban

received his poetical birth, have been pleased to combine personal with moral ugliness—a conjunction for which there is no authority in real life ; which imputes, moreover, a manifest injustice to Nature, and excites a most cruel and unfounded prejudice against those whom she has sent into the world in a crippled or deformed state,—a sufficient misfortune, one would think, without the addition of human wrong. For our own part, we hold with the Walpolean theory as to Richard's personal appearance, and refuse to take cognizance of Caliban, as being out of the pale of humanity. Valentine, at all events, was remarkably handsome, and scarcely less noted for his precocious strength and agility.

To save the inconvenient expense of schooling, he was ostensibly educated at home ; but this tuition was limited to such uncertain lessons as his aunts chose to give him, and to his grandfather's instruction in the military exercise, in cleaning a fowling-piece, in managng pointers, and similar valuable studies.

“ Girls,” said the Captain to his daughters,

a few days after the merchant's arrival at the Manor-House, "we ought to have called upon our new neighbour before this, and I should certainly have taken you last Wednesday, but that I had sent my blue military coat to be new cuffed and collared, and the blackguard of a tailor wouldn't return it till I had paid him a former bill, which, he said, had been owing upwards of two years. To treat a gentleman and an old customer in this way for a few shillings! By the powers! if it were not for fear of the law, I would horsewhip the rascal all round the green."

"These low fellows," exclaimed Matilda, petulantly, "are always ready to take advantage of their superiors. What a mean wretch the man must be!"

"I have done with him," pursued the Captain; "he is beneath my notice; and I shall punish him more effectually by withdrawing my patronage and support—for I am the only really respectable customer he has got—than if I had kicked him round the Curragh of Kildare."

"Had there been any blue cloth in the house," said Ellen, "I would myself have been your tailor, but we used up the last remnant to mend Valentine's trousers."

"Confound the little jackanapes!" exclaimed the father, "he wears and tears and soils and spoils more clothes than his head's worth, though that he may easily do. Well, Tilda, have you got new ribbons in your bonnet instead of those flaunting tumbled rags that you wore last Sunday?"

"La, pa! they were good enough for church and a showery day. New ones, indeed! Where am I to get them, when my purse is empty, as I am sure you *must* know, and the shop won't give me any further credit? But I have done without; Ellen has washed and ironed the old ones, so that I shall be quite smart enough for such an old frump as Mr. Brown."

"Why, you have not seen him?"

"No; but Val has. Determined to have a peep at the old quiz, he climbed up the wall as he was walking round the garden followed by another queer-looking chap,

whom he called John Trotman; so, when they had passed, Val threw a stone, just by way of leaving his card, and hit Brown on the back, who turned sharply round to his follower, crying out, 'What the devil do you mean by that, sirrah?' but John stoutly shook his head, and Brown persisted and got angry, and Val says he thought he should have died with laughing as he saw him grow red in the face, and thump his cane upon the gravel walk; while John employed himself in again treading the gravel smooth, where it had been forced up by the point of the cane, quietly repeating at each pressure of his foot, 'Spoil the walk.'

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Captain, "that boy has an immensity of humour, and takes after me in everything. Most of the Molloyes, indeed, have been celebrated for their drollery, though we don't see much of it in you, Nell, who are, on the contrary, generally a cup too low—at least you have been latterly. Well, girl, have you got your best bib and tucker all ready for calling at the Manor-House?"

“ I did not know that you wished me to have anything new,” replied Ellen, who felt the necessity of practising a strict economy, lest she should increase her father’s debts, which had already exposed them to various mortifications : “ but I have contrived to furbish up my old things, and make them as tidy as possible.”

“ No doubt, Nell, no doubt. You generally manage to look neat and genteel, but you’ll never be so stylish and dashing a girl as Tilda.”

“ But why, papa,” inquired the latter, “ are we to take such pains in our morning toilet, since there are none at whom we are to set our caps except our new neighbour, and his man Friday, or rather his every-day man, John Trotman ?”

“ Tush, girl ! you ought to have learnt long ago that your father is an old fox, and knows what he is about : when do I ever throw away a sprat, unless in the hope of catching a herring ? Listen, and I think you will both confess that I can see as far into a millstone as my neighbours. By the powers ! Captain

Charles Sullivan Molloy is no ninnyhammer; and when his wits are set a working, it will not be for nothing. Soon as I heard that old Brown had given a piano and a new horse to Mrs. Latimer, or rather to her sons, thinks I to myself, thinks I, the old fellow is reputed to be very rich, and to have no relations in the world but a scamp of a nephew, whom he has disowned, and he confesses, as Mrs. Latimer herself told me, that her husband first put him in the way of getting his money; and so, girls, I put two and two together, and said to myself, Who so likely to have the old fellow's rhino, when he is popped underground, as the Latimer family? Why, 'Tilda, what a flare-up there is in your eyes! and, Nell, how you blush and look down! What! you take the hint, do you? You jump to your own conclusions, or rather to my conclusions, I see. Lookye, girls; I want you to make a favourable impression upon old Brown; the first effect is everything: we'll endeavour to fish out how the land lies; we'll proceed from the Manor-House to Mrs. Latimer's—a most

respectable woman that Mrs. Latimer, and we owe her a call ; and you must set your smart bonnets at the young men to-day, and your caps at them afterwards. Do you catch the idea ?”

“ La, pa, how strangely you run on !” cried Matilda, bridling up, and glancing at a small mirror in a gaudy frame that hung beside her : “ for my part I expect the young fellows to run after me, without my setting my cap at them.”

“ Well, well, ”Tilda, I shall be glad to see them running or even walking in that direction ; but we must know which of them is best worth having ; for if you go to market with a husband, you’ll find two empty purses are worse than one. Now, harkye again, girls ! I have known the world longer than you : I have seen society of all sorts, and have fallen in with scores of these *parvenu* fellows, these *nouveaux riches*, these retired merchants or tradesmen, like old Brown, and have invariably found that, though the upstart rogues affected to despise birth and pedigree, and all that sort of thing, they were always anxious

to revenge themselves for not being descended from an old family by becoming the founders of a new one ; which, after all, is the same sort of pride, only tacked on to the beginning of the line instead of the end."

" A very pretty 'abstract proposition, papa, and I dare say a very sound truth and shrewd observation ; but its bearing on the present question I confess myself too dull to discover."

" That's not my fault, but your misfortune, Miss Molloy, so listen and learn.—Depend upon it, if old Brown means to leave his money to the Latimers, he will adopt Allan, the eldest, make him his heir, and insist upon the younger son going out into the world and fighting his own way, as he himself did. Hallo, Nell ! what makes you sigh so ?"

" Was I sighing ?" replied his daughter, blushing deeply, and turning aside her face to conceal her confusion : " I was not aware of it. Shall I run and put on my bonnet ? I shall be ready to accompany you in a few minutes." And so saying, she hurried out of the room without awaiting his reply.

Ellen's habitual tidiness and love of method enabling her to find everything that she wanted without a moment's delay, she soon reappeared, her youth and good taste imparting to her an air of decided elegance, spite of the plain simplicity and cheap materials of her attire. Matilda's toilet was not so soon despatched, her room and her drawers being always in confusion, and her style of dress much more elaborate; while her love of admiration and display made her fastidious, however narrow might be her wardrobe, in selecting the finery for the day. Downstairs she bustled at length, flaunting in a many-coloured gingham gown, beflowered and befurbelowed up to the knees, her turned silk tippet and bright gloves vainly endeavouring to conceal the arts that had renewed their freshness, the gay ribbons of her straw bonnet affecting an air of crisp novelty from their recent ironing. Though the bloom of youth had left her, Matilda contrived, somehow or other, to have a colour in her cheeks when it was especially needed, and, as this was one of those occasions, she

might seem to merit her father's usual eulogy that she was a fine, handsome, dashing girl,—terms which in his estimation conveyed the very highest encomium that a young female could receive. Nor had the Captain been less studious than his eldest daughter to render himself as personable as possible,—a point in which he was seldom negligent, for he had by no means forgotten that he had once been celebrated for his good looks and fine figure. Though the new cuffs and collar of the military blue coat, which had been impounded by the inexorable tailor, did not quite harmonise with the thread-bare texture and faded hue of the body, still the frogs and tassels with which it was decorated, and the consequential air with which it was worn, gave it a sort of importance, supported as it was by a pair of embroidered trousers, which had seen good service, but which were so tightly strapped down to the high-quartered shoes, and so well adjusted to the figure, that their antiquity was scarcely perceptible.

His coat, buttoned high up across his

broad chest, joined his black leather stock, conveniently precluding the necessity of showing any frill ; a false collar arose high on either side of his whiskers, so as partly to conceal their increasing grey hue ; his bald head was hidden by a bell-shaped high-crowned hat, which, though napless and of a very equivocal hue, was carried jauntily on one side ; and, as he strutted along, performing the sword exercise in the air with a rattan, a practice of which he had contracted a habit, our portly well-preserved Captain might have been taken for a man ten or fifteen years younger than he really was. The Somersetshire clown of a servant-boy whom his master called the tiger, while Matilda dubbed him the page, converting his English name of Charles into Carlos, because it sounded more foreign and romantic, was summoned to attend them on their visit to the Manor-House, that he might carry the umbrella, though there was no appearance of rain. Enduing accordingly a soiled jacket which exhibited a profuse eruption of pewter buttons, he placed a discoloured hat upon

his head, looped up all round with tarnished gold cord, grasped a cotton umbrella in his dirty gloveless hand, and thus accoutred prepared to trudge after the party, much more solicitous to lag behind and gather blackberries than to contribute, as was intended, to the pomp and glory of the family procession.

“Where’s young Flibbertigibbet?” demanded the Captain, just as they were about to start.

“What, Val?” laughed Matilda. “Oh! he is off to cure the ducks on the common, some of whom he nearly choked yesterday by feeding them with raisins stuffed with cayenne pepper. He declares they have done nothing but quack—quack—quack ever since; so this morning he has gone to administer some pellets of bread filled with salt, which he says must infallibly cure them; and upon the strength of this prescription he means to take out his diploma as the *quack* doctor of Woodcote.”

“Ha! ha! ha!” roared the Captain.

“What a wag he is, the young dog! a true Molloy: such an immensity of humour! He seems determined that I shall laugh at his droll pranks all day long.—Ha! ha——” The full cachinnation was cut short by a start of pain, and a sudden exclamation of—“Zounds! what the deuce is this?”—a cry occasioned by his having thrust his fingers, in attempting to pull on his glove, against some prickly furze which had been carefully insinuated into it.—“The little blackguard—the scapegrace—the vagabond!” vociferated the sufferer, shaking his aggrieved fingers, as he looked fiercely behind him.

“Twor’d’n I, zur, I’ll take my bible woth on’t,” said the page, perfectly crimson in the face from suppressed laughter. “I would’n go vor ta do zich a thing vor all the world: I zee maester Valentine a gathering some vurze on the common, and I dare zay tha trick’s hisn.”

“No doubt, no doubt, nobody else would have dared. By the powers! if I had him here, I would break every bone in his skin.”

“La, pa !” exclaimed Matilda, “how can you wonder at his little frolicsome ways, when he is such a true Molloy?”

“But the good-for-nothing puppy should spare his own flesh and blood,” replied the father, applying his bleeding thumb to his mouth. Ellen, meanwhile, who was usually the peacemaker upon these occasions, having cleared the gloves of their thorny contents, not without some slight self-infliction, handed them to their owner, apologising for the culprit by pleading his youth and thoughtlessness,—a mediation not without its effect, though her father winced more than once as he slowly and cautiously ventured his hand into the treacherous trap.

The nearest way to the Manor-House was by a lane diverging from the common, and sunk between high banks, skirted with hedges and thickets, along which they had made some progress, when a few drops of unexpected rain suggested the prudence of hoisting the umbrella, to protect the newly ironed ribbons of the fair pedestrians. “Hallo, Carlos ! Where have you got to,

sirrah?" bawled the Captain,—an inquiry which soon occasioned the "tiny foot-page" to jump from the bushes, and run up to the party, exclaiming, "Here be I, zur," as he wiped his blackberry-stained mouth on the sleeve of his jacket.

"How now, you dirty little dog!" cried the Captain, shaking his rattan; "is this the way you spoil my expensive new liveries? If I catch you at such nasty tricks again I'll lace your jacket for you finely: give me the umbrella. Now, girls, stand close, and I'll open it for you." Suiting the action to the word, he unlooped and expanded it, when a profuse shower of sawdust fell upon the trio, eliciting from Carlos an ungovernable horse-laugh, and from Matilda a vehement exclamation of "That horrid boy! this is another of his practical jokes, and I do hope you will give him a good sound horse-whipping."

"How can you wonder at his little frolicsome ways when he's such a true Molloy?" asked the father, retorting his daughter's words.

“And after all,” interceded Ellen, “the sawdust is quite dry, so that it will not hurt us: and we don’t know that poor Val put it into the umbrella.” A shrill childish laugh from the bordering thicket, followed by the exclamation of “Crikey! what fun!” soon settled the identity of the young offender, and provoked the ire of his grandfather, who ran up the bank in the direction of the sound, ejaculating, as he flourished his rattan, “By the powers! the rogue shall pay for laughing at us thus to our very faces.” But as a greyhound would hardly have caught the agile Valentine, who knew every winding of the brake, the Captain soon abandoned the pursuit, and had just reached the bottom of the bank when his foot caught in the tangled roots, and he fell prostrate,—an accident followed by a second shrill laugh, and exclamation of “Crikey! what fun!” that seemed to proceed from the opposite side of the lane.

At this fresh catastrophe another irrepressible horse-laugh burst from Carlos, which became as suddenly converted, as he

caught the infuriated eye of his master, into a look of unutterable and almost super-human solemnity. In answer to Ellen's eager inquiries, as she ran to help him up, her father declared that he was not in the least hurt, and, having ascertained that his trousers were in the same enviable situation, he carefully knocked off the dirt from his knees, and resumed his march for the Manor-House, which the party reached without any farther mishap.

CHAPTER III.

"MY good Sir," began the Captain, assuming a somewhat patronizing and consequential air, as he bowed himself, not ungracefully, into the parlour, "I should have done myself the honour of calling sooner, for I am well aware that the leading people of the locality should always be the first to welcome a new neighbour, as the rank and file will of course follow the example of their superior officers—you'll excuse my military language, being an old soldier,—but the fact is I have an apology to offer, which——"

"Which I will not trouble you to offer at all," interposed Brown, who hated all flummery and finery, and felt rather nettled at the airs assumed by his visitant. "You might have stayed away longer if you liked."

and you needn't have called now if you didn't like ; for, though I shall be always happy to see the good folks of Woodcote and its vicinity, I rather think I can do without them.—My name, Sir, is Adam Brown, late of the firm of Brown, Gubbins, and Co. ; and the books of the Bank of England will vouch, I believe, for my respectability and independence.” This was not a very polite speech, but the worthy merchant did not pique himself upon his courtesy, and did pique himself upon the money which he had so hardly earned, and which he thought ought to secure him a position in society, wherever he might settle, and whosoever might be his neighbours. “ But you have not introduced me to these young ladies,” he continued in a blander tone—“ your daughters, I presume ?”

“ Yes, Sir, yes,” replied the father, looking at them with a smile of pride ; “ and the finest and most fashionable, as well as the most accomplished girls in this part of the county, though I say it that shouldn't say it.” Matilda endeavoured to look modest at this speech, and, not feeling quite sure that she had succeeded, for that particular expression

was not her *forte*, she determined to appear girlish and simple by giving her father a tap with her fingers and affectedly ejaculating "La, pa ! how can you ?" Ellen's eyes were fixed on the ground, her usually faint bloom undergoing a deeper suffusion as she listened to the coarse praises of her father.

"I suppose," resumed the latter, "that you have seen most of our immediate neighbours, *old* Penfold the parson, and *old* Dawson the apothecary, and *old* Roger Crab of Monkwell,"—for the Captain was in the habit of applying this term to his contemporaries, and even to his juniors, imagining that it would assist him in passing himself off for a younger man than he really was.

"The former gentlemen have called, but I have not yet seen anything of Mr. Crab."

"No loss, Mr. Brown—no loss if he never comes near you ; for a more sneering, snarling, sarcastic, ill-tempered old hunks it would be difficult to find. I don't know which is the sourest—his looks or his temper."

"I verily believe," cried Matilda, "that the two together turned our beer the last time he paid us a visit."

“Ha, ha, ha ! well done, ’Tilda. My eldest daughter, you see, is a wit—always had a jocular turn. By the powers ! it must have been as she says : nothing could have done it but old Crab’s verjuice face, for I brew my own beer, and capital stuff it is,—all malt and hops, no water. I hope you’ll do me the favour of tasting it one of these days.”

“I wonder you suffer so disagreeable and dangerous a fellow to visit you,” observed the merchant.

“Why, Sir, I am good-tempered to a fault, —always was ; and if the leading person of the place was to turn his back upon old Crab, he might as well turn hermit at once, and become the monk of Monkwell. Ha, ha, ha ! Besides, he is as bilious as a Nabob, his wife is a confirmed invalid, neither of them are likely to live long, their money must go somewhere : and then he has purchased the right of shooting over an extensive manor ; he often invites me to accompany him ; and as he is too sickly to eat all the game he shoots, he is compelled to give it to his acquaintance.”

“Why, then, it would appear that he does possess some good qualities.”

“Not he; not any, at least, that he can help,—an old cynical curmudgeon!”

“Nay, dear papa,” urged Ellen, “you forget that he makes a most affectionate husband to a sick wife, and that he is very kind and generous to the poor, though he does scold them pretty sharply when he thinks they deserve it. Everybody says that his bark is worse than his bite; and besides, he is so absent, that I do think he hardly knows at times what ill-natured things he is saying.”

“Ay, Nell, and that’s the reason why I never notice his impertinence. If I thought he *meant* to be insolent—*By* the powers!——” In delivering his favourite adjuration the Captain was accustomed to accumulate the emphasis on the first word with a vehemence proportioned to the gravity of the occasion; his present stress upon the “*by*” evidently implying that, if there were sufficient ground for the process, he would make no bones of the offender, but swallow him up whole, or cut him up into mincemeat, according to the state of his digestive functions. “Egad,

Nell!" he continued, "both his bark and his bite are bad enough."

"I have heard Ellen maintain," cried Matilda, "that there was sweetness at his heart, even when there was sourness in his mouth. If it is so, I can only say that his barley-sugar drops are very highly acidulated. Ha, ha, ha!"

"D'ye hear that? d'ye hear that?" exclaimed the father. "Didn't I tell you Tilda was a wit? As to old Crab, with his venomous jibes and jeers and his malignant——" The conclusion of this speech was arrested by the opening of the door and the appearance of John Trotman, ushering in the very party thus bitterly vituperated. "Ha, my good friend Crab!" cried the unabashed Captain, "I was just singing your praises to Mr. Brown. Allow me to introduce you to him." And he went through the form of presentation with as much pomposity as if he were in his own house and were conferring a favour upon both parties. Brown, after gazing for a minute on the face of his new visitant, a little shrivelled man of

an atrabilious hue and sufficiently acid expression, turned towards Matilda, exclaiming, with a significant smile, "It is fortunate, Miss Molloy, that I have not yet brewed my beer."

"Oh—ay—true!" cried the Captain, whose self-possession was almost the only one that he retained. "We were talking, Mr. Crab, of my famous table-ale—capital stuff, and yet never gets up into the head."

"That *is* a recommendation," replied the party addressed, "for I have a great horror of water on the brain."

"Curious old mansion this," pursued the Captain, pretending not to hear the last innuendo; "on a small scale it reminds me in some respects of my own patrimonial seat. Ah, Mr. Crab! you were never at my fine place—Clognakilty House, in the county Down."

"No, Captain; were *you*?" And then, as if talking to himself, the old gentleman ejaculated, as he counted his fingers, "There are estates in Ayrshire, and in the Isle of Skye, and in the Scilly Islands; and there are *Châteaux en Espagne*; and Ariosto tells us that

all lost things are collected together in the moon: but where is there a depôt for the things that are very circumstantially described, but which never existed? It ought to be capacious. Yours is a large estate, I believe?"

"Immense, Sir, immense! I forget the exact number of acres,—Irish acres, you know, are larger than yours,—but it is certainly one of the finest places in Ireland, though I say it that shouldn't say it."

"Nay, there we differ; for if you didn't say it, nobody would. If you assert the fact, I believe it; if I had seen the place with my own eyes, I might perhaps have doubted: but it's all the same, it's all the same. How say the logicians? *De non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio.*"

"And such hunting!" resumed the Captain, addressing himself to Brown: "I must give you an account some day of my celebrated hunter Paddywhack, and my famous racehorse Skyscraper. Faith and troth! I played first fiddle at the meetings in Ireland."

"The Irish, I believe, have their lyres, as

well as their fiddles," muttered Crab, again counting his fingers with a vacant look of absence. "Some say that the lyre of Mercury had three strings, some say four, some say seven. Amphion built up the walls of Thebes by means of a lyre—Quære: Was Amphion an Irishman? The lyre of Orpheus was thrown into the sea—Quære: Did you live near the coast in Ireland?"

"The great steeple-chase that I rode at Clognakilty," resumed Molloy, "is admitted to be the most wonderful thing of the sort ever performed. Skyscraper would climb up a stone wall of twelve feet high like a cat: well, Sir, he took ten of these walls; and after I had rode him at speed for seven hours without drawing bit, he cleared at a leap a river twenty-four feet wide. But the ground was low on the opposite side; the shock deranged my digestive functions; and for upwards of five months—ay, just five months and four days—I could never eat more than an ounce at a time, so that I was known among my friends by the nickname of Ounce Molloy."

"Are you quite sure it was not *Bounce*

Molloy ? ” asked Crab, in a tone and with a look of innocent curiosity. “ Bounce, Jupiter, bounce, are the words of Midas in O’Hara’s burletta of *The Golden Pippin*. High nonsense, says Addison, is like beer in a bottle, which has in reality no strength or spirit, but frets, and flies, and bounces, and imitates the passions of a much nobler liquor.”

It might have been thought that the Captain would have taken offence at these splenetic and pointed sallies, but he was not a man to quarrel with a neighbour from whom he occasionally borrowed money, besides deriving various other advantages from his propinquity. Crab, moreover, had a sort of charter, as a humorist subject to strange fits of absence, for thinking aloud, and uttering whatever vagaries suggested themselves to his wandering thoughts ; nor was it easy to believe that there was any raillery, badinage, or intentional offence in his effusions, however caustic ; for his countenance never lost the grim seriousness of its expression, if we may except an occasional twinkle of his small sharpeye, and his manner was invariably

respectful. Rude and inopportune as his escapades appeared, they might indeed have been taken for the unconscious babblings of one who imagined that he was talking to himself and by himself, were it not manifest to a keen observer that he never gave them utterance unless when he was provoked by some display of arrogance, folly, or pretension. The blushing Ellen, who had been sitting upon thorns while her father rode his boastful hobby and received these awkward side-thrusts from his persevering assailant, succeeded at last in turning the conversation upon the proposed improvements and restorations of the Manor-House, observing that the various styles of the building might occasion a little embarrassment to the architect. "What care I for architects and styles?" demanded the merchant. "If I am to pay for it, the style shall be my own, and that shall be the convenient and the comfortable style. I hate accommodation bills, but I do like accommodation houses. What stuff and nonsense to import a style of building from Italy, unless you can also import the Italian climate!"

“But the Manor-House,” urged Ellen, “is of a totally opposite order. It is conventual—quite English.”

“But *old* English, Miss Ellen ; and we may as well talk Saxon as build Saxon in these days. To borrow the style of our houses from the middle ages is as foolish as to import one from Italy. We want them to live in, not to look at ; and if the inside pleases my fancy, I don’t care a button how much the outside may offend the fancies of other people. I’ll have my own way, I repeat, for my own money, or I’ll know the reason why.”

“All our dwellings,” said Crab, “are in the same style—the perishable. We give the toil of a life to build up a fortune with which to build up a house, in order that our heirs may kick down the fortune and pull down the house. What says Pope ?—

‘ Another age shall see the golden ear
Embrown the slope and nod on the parterre ;
Deep harvests bury all his pride has plann’d,
And laughing Ceres reassume the land.’ ”

“Not if it’s entailed, Sir ; not if it’s tied up,” exclaimed Brown. “Thank God, Sir,

we live in England, not in France, where the rascally testamentary law will not allow a fellow to dispose of his own property, however hardly earned. This may be termed freedom—it is certainly making free with one's property—but I call it robbery.”

“Faith and troth ! and I agree with you quite entirely,” exclaimed the Captain, who saw himself in a fair way of attaining the great object of his visit. “Nothing like primogeniture and entail. I am myself an eldest son, and so have been all the proprietors of Clognakilty House since the days of the old Earls of Clognakilty, from whom I have the honour of being descended.”

“Very much descended,” muttered Crab. “Oh, Hamlet, what a falling off was there ! There are men who are an honour to their titles, and there are men whose titles are their sole honour. What can ennoble—— ? but I have quoted Pope already.”

“After you have bestowed your time and money in restoring the Manor-House,”

pursued the Captain, "you would not like the notion of its being brought to the hammer for division among your successors."

"What, Sir, after I have toiled from London to Smyrna, and from Smyrna to Constantinople and Alexandria, to make a fortune, do you think I would set it up to be bowled down again like ninepins, by a whole family of spendthrift youngsters? Not I. Into whatever family it may go, I shall leave it to the eldest son, and tie it up as tight as the law can make it."—Molloy looked at his Matilda, whose countenance became lighted up with a sudden animation, while Ellen heaved a half-suppressed sigh, and fixed her eyes upon the ground. "Yes, Sir," continued the merchant, "and I am by no means sure that I shall not paint the house brown, and make him take the name of Brown, and have a brown complexion, and wear brown clothes, and eat brown bread, and drink brown stout, on pain of forfeiting the Brown estate. Ha, ha!" And, not having the cane in his hand, the mer-

chant confirmed this resolution by two sharp stamps of his heel upon the floor, as if he thereunto set his foot and seal.

Some further gasconades of the incorrigible Captain having drawn down upon him a renewal of oblique sarcasms from Crab, Ellen, in order to protect her father, engaged the attention of his assailant by detailing a case of distress,—a subject which never failed to elicit from her auditor an angry diatribe against the improvidence of the poor, and to secure some eventual relief to the sufferers, if, on a strict inquiry, they proved to be real objects of charity. Availing himself of this temporary diversion, the father whispered to Brown, as he pointed towards the delinquent, “I hope you don’t mind his saucy sallies;—I don’t, for he really doesn’t know what he is saying. Flighty, Sir, flighty—we call him Crazy Crab. Even when he means to be splenetic, and caustic, and waspish, we only laugh at his impertinence. You’re not offended with his wanderings, I trust?”

“Certainly not, if *you* are not,” replied

Brown, chuckling till he grew red in the face. "On the contrary, I think his wanderings, as you call them, are very like home-thrusts, or shots in the bull's eye. Depend upon it, he's a good bowler, for he seems to know that, if you would hit the Jack at last, you must seem at first not to be taking aim at it."—At this moment Matilda alluded to some private theatricals about to be performed at Gloucester, when the Captain, utterly unable to lose any opportunity of bragging, exclaimed, "Ah, Sir! nothing like Kilkenny for private theatricals—never was and never will be. Egad, I starred it there famously—took all the first characters. "Tilda dear, what was that celebrated Spanish character that all the world declared I acted to the very life?"

"Ferdinand Mendez Pinto," ejaculated Crab, breaking off from his colloquy with Ellen, "was a celebrated Spaniard, and a surprising economist—of truth; being ever the first to visit non-existent cities, and to receive the most circumstantial intelligence of things that had never happened. His

travels are extant, and written in choice Castilian."

"We were a jolly party of us," resumed the Captain, not heeding this interruption; "and, faith! we kept it up famously. There was the Marquis of Mayo, Lord Ormonde, Walter Butler, and I: we agreed to dine with one another in turn, that is to say, when I was not engaged to dine with the Duke of —— Psha! I shall forget my own name next. 'Tilda dear! what *is* the name of that Duke I dined with so often at Kilkenny?"

"Duke Humphrey—Duke Humphrey! Eureka! it is found!" exclaimed Crab. "Douce, in his *Illustrations of Shakespeare*, explains the first phrase; the second was uttered by Archimedes, when, on entering a full bath, he discovered that the quantity of water displaced depended upon the weight and volume of the body immersed in it."

Being gifted with an effrontery not easily dashed by any rebuffs, the Captain, who liked to hear the sound of his own voice,

however deaf he might be to that of Crab, flourished away in the same vapouring vein, until, having said enough, as he thought, to establish the antiquity of his race, his high connections, the grandeur of his Irish estate, and the consequent advantages and honours of being connected with his family, he proceeded to eulogise the Latimers, in order to feel the pulse of the merchant, and to propitiate him towards an alliance between the eldest son of that lady and one of his own daughters, should the former be likely to succeed to the Manor-House estate.

As Matilda saw his manœuvre, and was not in the habit of being restrained in the promotion of her views by any over-scrupulous delicacy, she not only declared that nobody could help being partial to such a good, such a charming young man as Allan Latimer, but endeavoured, by her significant looks and affected confusion, to confirm her father's averment that she had always had a sneaking kindness for him, and that he had detected young Allan more than once casting sheep's eyes at 'Tilda. This broad

inuendo, meant for the special ear of the merchant, was followed up by a fresh encomium on the Latimer family in general, whom the Captain was plastering with praise in his usual coarse style when Crab broke the thread of his eulogy by muttering, in one of his audible musings, "If praise undeserved be censure in disguise, what shall we term merited praise when it comes from the undeserving? The boa constrictor slavers what it means to devour. A moot point—a moot point."

"Hark at poor Crab," cried the Captain: "soliloquising again—knows no more where he is—wits all wool-gathering. Hollo, neighbour!" and he slapped him familiarly on the shoulder; "are you aware that you are the man in the moon?"

"No—but I imagined myself to be in Clognakilty House, which is the same thing," said Crab drily.

"Ha, ha, ha! capital! capital!" roared the Captain, apparently enjoying the joke at his own expense; and then, with a profusion of pompous and patronising declarations as

to his readiness to serve, and introduce, and countenance the proprietor of the Manor-House, he shook him cordially by the hand, gave a friendly nod with an accompanying "Good bye, old boy," to Crab, and, taking the arms of his daughters, strutted smilingly out of the room.

"By the powers!" he exclaimed, as soon as they were clear of the premises, "wasn't I right, girls? When, indeed, was Charles Sullivan Molloy ever known to be mistaken? Didn't I tell you that the mushroom, the upstart, the *parvenu* would be an advocate for primogeniture, and would have all the pride of ancestry to come, if that isn't a bull? And did you mark how cleverly I drew the secret out of his soul, like a cork out of a bottle? And didn't I foresee it all, as to the Latimers? Ah! you may thank Heaven for giving you such a knowing father. I have shown you the game, girls; it is for you to play the cards; and if you play them well, I may live to see one of you mistress of the Manor-House estate. Old Brown's asthmatic—his lease will soon be up."

“La, Pa! how soon you can run up a castle in the air!” exclaimed Matilda. “Let us walk over the fields to the Latimers’, and go in at the garden-gate. It will be good sport, for Mrs. Latimer is such an old-fashioned tidy body, that she can’t bear to be taken by surprise, and I do like to worry these finical folks, who must have everything in apple-pie order.”

“You are not very likely to succeed,” said the sister, “if you expect to find her house at sixes and sevens, for neatness and method have become a habit with her, and her sons seem to have inherited the same disposition.”

“We’ll try, at all events,” replied Matilda, who imagined herself to be sportive and jocular when her malicious pleasantries exposed others to vexation and annoyance. On their reaching the gate, the two brothers were seen working in the garden without their coats, Allan being employed in digging, and Walter in repairing a barrow. “Wait a moment,” cried the former, kissing his hand to the visitants as soon as he had re-

cognised them, "and I will run for the key; the gate is locked."

"Pooh! pooh! never mind the key," said Matilda: "lend me your hand, and I will climb over in a minute."

As she had already begun to scale it, Allan ran to her assistance, when she took his proffered hand with a gentle pressure, contrived to make a very tolerable display of her leg,—whether to exhibit the pink silk half of her stocking or her well-turned ankle it becomes us not to decide,—and, having safely reached the top, leaped to the ground with a girlish giggle.

"Bravo, 'Tilda!" exclaimed the father; "jumped like a greyhound. What a mad-cap you are! But young folks will be young folks."

"I hope *you* won't attempt it, Ellen," said Walter, hurrying towards them: "I will bring the key in a minute."

"I had no intention of the sort," was the blushing reply: "I am not so active as 'Tilda. Papa and I will wait your return."

Her sister, meanwhile, placing her unin-

vited arm in Allan's, walked towards the house, where they were speedily joined by the rest of the party, and welcomed with her usual lady-like cordiality by Mrs. Latimer, whose *ménage* and personal appearance, so far from exhibiting any trait of the confusion which had been anticipated, and even wished, by Matilda, presented that uniform "apple-pie order" which she loved to ridicule as quizzical and old-maidish.

CHAPTER IV.

“JOHN TROTMAN,” said his master to him, on the morning after the visit we have been describing, “I have been climbing up to the belfry atop o’ the house, which is sadly decayed, but we’ll have it all set to rights, and the rails round the platform restored; it will make a capital place for smoking. Where did you put my long cherry-tree chibouque with the amber bowl and mouth-piece?”

“Packed—London,” was the laconic answer.

“Famous view, John, from the belfry; been scouring the country all round with my telescope,—and a capital one it is. Do you remember my being the first to discover the felucca privateer, stealing out from

Civita Vecchia, when you were junior mate of the *Arethusa*? Egad! I began to think my supercargo's commissions were not worth a brass farthing."

"Ran for the Straits of St. Boniface. Wrong!" was the reply.

"But I say I was right."

"And I say you was wrong," persisted the servant.

"Is that the way, sirrah! that you speak to your master?"

John gave an affirmative nod. "Was there ever such a provoking—Now I suppose you mean to insinuate, by that impertinent nod, that I'm an obstinate wrongheaded old fellow?" John gave an equivocal and yet respectful bow, as much as to say, if you think so, I have no wish to differ from you; when the merchant, who had been too long accustomed to his odd ways to be easily offended, continued, "Well, John, I have made another discovery with my telescope—I have seen a fellow digging a grave in the churchyard; and so I'll just walk up and—The last time I was there I was playing marbles

with—never mind—you can't expect me to remember their names: why, it's eight, ay nine-and-forty years ago next Shrovetide."

"Don't expect—don't want."

"Put on your hat, John, put on your hat, and we'll go and overhaul the churchyard, and look about us a little, and see whose grave they are digging."

"Why, John Trotman," said the merchant as they were wending their way to the church, "you look more glumpy than ever: what's the matter with you?"

"Hate churchyards."

"What, then, have you buried a dear friend, some time or other?" A nod and the word "wife" were the reply.

"Wife! why, I never knew you were married. What has a sailor to do with any one wife in particular? I thought they always considered themselves wedded to the 'Charming Kitty,' or the 'Lovely Sally,' in which they sailed. Can there be any comfort in a spouse from whom you are always running away?" Another nod, accompanied by a look of grim grief.

“ Ah, John ! I have been a luckier man than you—a bachelor, a jolly bachelor, all my life. Never had to mourn for the death of a wife. No, no ; depend upon it, we single fellows have the best of it. Look at me : go where I like, do what I like ; nobody to worry or to weary me.” John shook his head and pronounced the word “ Glossop.” “ Why, sometimes, I must confess, she does bother me with her foreign lingo, but she’s a good creature nevertheless, though I know you dislike her because she jabbers so much French.”

A nod of ready acquiescence signified John’s assent to this declaration.

Having by this time reached the churchyard, Brown strolled to the spot where the sexton was at work,—a process which seldom fails to arrest the foot and the attention of every chance wanderer,—and stood for two or three minutes silently contemplating the scene. Though bald-headed, toothless, and age-bent, the gravedigger had a merry smirk in his countenance singularly at variance with his mournful occupation, and he coughed and chuckled till he showed his

bare gums, when, in answer to the inquiry whose grave he was digging, he replied, in a cracked voice, and with a vacant gape of astonishment, "What! be you the Squoire fro' th' Manor-House? Heart alive! what a queer-looking fish, to be sure!" And then, wiping the perspiration from his forehead with his shirt-sleeve, he continued—"Ax pardon, Squoire, for staring, but I never seed you afore, you know, for I couldn't wait at the Green Man any longer when you comed in. Whose grave? why, Dame Spurling's the grocer's wife; and there's Master Spurling a taking on for her loss fit to break his heart. Was there ever such a thing heard on? Hugh! Hugh!"

"Ah! that comes of not being a bachelor," said the merchant, looking at Trotman, who stood gazing down into the grave. His compressed lips and stern features attesting that his thoughts were with his departed wife.

"And what may be your name, goodman delver?" inquired Brown.

"My name be Bat Ruggles, and I've

lived here or hereabout, man and boy, well nigh—”

“What! you’re not the son of old Dick Ruggles the mole-catcher, of Charlton Abbot’s?”

“Yes, but I be though—how the dickens should you ha’ know’d that?”

“Look at me, Bat, and try whether you can recollect me.” Holding himself as upright as he could, and shading his face with his hand, the old man peered at the interrogator for some time, and then replied, “You’ve got a look of old Hobson the cobbler, but he be dead. No; I never clapped eyes on ye afore, not as I knows on.”

“Do you remember robbing Farmer Stubbs’s orchard when you were a youngster, and the great dog seizing you by the arm?”

“To be sure I do, and there be the scar,” replied the graybeard, pulling the shirt-sleeve up his bronzed arm.

“And who was your companion in that exploit?”

“Why, young Brown; he were a poticary’s boy then, and ran away arterards, ’cause he was horsewhipped for riding the pony arter

the hounds with a basketfull of doctor's bottles, which was all broken."

"There you're out, Bat Ruggles, for the pony ran away with me, and frightened me out of my wits."

"You ! why, heart alive ! you don't mean to say that you be young Brown ? No, no, I arn't to be tooked in o' that way, nether. Why, young Brown were a pretty boy wi' curly locks."

"And you, Bat, were then an active young fellow, famous for leaping over the brook with a pole."

"So I were, so I were; but I be crooked-backed and stiff-jointed now. He, he ! hugh ! hugh !" Seeming to think his decrepitude and infirmities a particularly good joke, the old man continued chuckling and coughing, and displaying his boneless gums, till the merchant had twice asked him in what part of the churchyard Mrs. Brown was buried.

"What, old Mrs. Brown that once kept the shop, and a'terards lived like a lady in the Brook Cottage, 'acause her son sent her home money from foreign parts ? Ay, ay, I'll soon

show ye where she do lie,—I ought to know, for I ha' dug all the graves since Lady Mayhew's time." So saying, he held his spade upright, and, scraping off from his shoes the kneaded clay which had once, perhaps, constituted the throbbing heart of a rustic lover, or the teeming brain of some village poet or politician, he slowly clambered out of the grave, chuckling again at his own crippled state, and hobbled to the opposite side of the church, where he pointed out a flat gravestone, inscribed with the name of the deceased, and the dates of her birth and death. "There's a trifle for your pains, and you may now go back to your work," said the merchant.

"Hallo, Squire!" was the reply; "you don't keep a very sharp look-out. You've giv me a sovereign instead of a shilling."

"Keep it, Bat Ruggles, it's no mistake; I gave it you as my old playfellow, and there's another for your honesty."

"God bless you, Squire! and may it be some little time afore ever I have the burying on you! but as to my doing any more

work this blessed day, wi' a couple o' sovereigns in my pocket—Lord love you! I never heard tell o' such a thing. Dame Spurling must bury herself if she's in any hurry." So saying, he thrust the two pieces of gold into his tight polished leathers, the exterior of which presented on one side a well-mapped tobacco-box, on the other an outline of the penny pieces which usually garnished his pocket; and, after repeating his thanks, hobbled away, his intermingled chucklings and coughings remaining long audible as he trudged along towards the Green Man.

For some minutes after his departure Brown remained with his eyes fixed on the grave-stone, in a deep reverie, ruminating on the days that were gone, and the innumerable acts of maternal kindness he had experienced from the parent who was mouldering beneath his feet; while John Trotman continued equally silent and transfixed, his visage assuming a still more rueful expression as his thoughts reverted to his departed wife, and the day of her burial.

"It's a sad thing," at length exclaimed

the merchant, as a tear trickled unconsciously down his cheek ; “ it’s a sad thing, John Trotman, to lose a good mother ; the being who has given you your life, and fed you from her own bosom, and dandled you in her arms, and watched over you when you were asleep. Mine was the kindest-hearted creature in the world, and never in her whole life—never—” His voice became husky, unbidden tears were coursing one another down his cheek, and he blew his nose to conceal the sudden gush of emotion that had unmanned him. John remained silent and immoveable, but not without sympathy, for, as he noticed his master’s distress, a tear or two fell upon his folded hands.

“ It is a great consolation,” resumed Brown, in a softened tone, “ to think that we have done—Ehem !—These cold churchyards make a fellow confoundedly hoarse—that we have done—that we have done our duty by the dear departed.”

“ Great—con—con—consolation,” whimpered the servant, as he wiped first one eye and then the other with the sleeve of his

coat ; when the merchant, finding there was no better method of concealing his own emotion than by abusing that of his companion, turned angrily towards him, exclaiming, "What the deuce are you blubbering about, you great stupid oaf?"

"Not blubbering."

"But I say you were, and I won't be contradicted ; and it's very wrong ; and very wicked, not to be resigned to these dispensations. It's like flying in the face of Providence."

"You flew first."

"And I hate whining and pining fellows about me ; and so you had better go back, for there's plenty to do at home ; and I can't think, for my part, why you accompanied me."

"Ordered me."

"Did I ? then I'm the greatest fool of the two." John gave a respectful bow, and then walked slowly and doggedly back to the Manor-House, pondering so deeply upon his deceased wife, that he passed the gate, and did not discover his mistake till he came

to the end of the encircling wall. His master, in the mean while, having hovered for some time longer around his mother's grave, indulging in tender recollections of the past, wandered amid the tombstones, recalling the history of those whom he had known in his youth, and wondering whence others could have come with whose names he was unfamiliar. His soliloquies during this suggestive ramble,—the sudden awakening of thoughts that had slumbered for nearly half a century in his mind,—his amazement at the parties all dying, when he had left them so young and so healthy,—his still greater astonishment that he, who had run away from Woodcote as an apothecary's boy, should now be settled there as the proprietor of the Manor-House, "with rather more than seven shillings and ninepence in his pocket,"—and the solemn thought that ere many more years elapsed he himself would probably be laid low among the play-mates and acquaintance of his youth,—we shall not attempt to describe further than by stating that these mingled reflections de-

tained him more than an hour in the churchyard, occasioning various long reveries, broken by sudden exclamations of "Ha! ha!" and concurrent plantings of his cane upon the ground or upon the tombstones.

CHAPTER V.

QUITTING the churchyard by a stile, Brown followed a footpath across the fields, still too much immersed in thought to pay any attention to the direction in which he might be wandering, until he found himself standing beside the homestead of an old-fashioned farm-house, with ponderous chimneys of twisted brickwork, and a high sandstone roof, patched over with bright-coloured moss and lichens. Beneath the boughs of one of the noble oaks that overshadowed each corner of the enclosure, a half-clad girl, seated on a three-legged stool, was so busily employed in milking a cow, that she did not notice his approach, until he leaned over the low wall, and inquired the name of the farm. "Four-oak Farm, Sir," replied the

little maiden, starting up, and then curtsying and colouring deeply.

“What, John Chubbs’s farm?”

“Yes, Sir, if you please,” answered the girl, again curtsying.

“Odsbobs! that’s lucky: I meant to have called here; I must have a little talk with master Chubbs.” As the speaker’s countenance indicated that the colloquy was not likely to be of a very pleasant nature, it may be necessary to explain that the unlucky farmer was scheduled in the rent-roll of the Manor-House estate, under which he was a tenant, as a debtor for a year and a half’s unpaid rent. Now, our merchant, with whom punctuality and regularity in money transactions were cardinal virtues, had a proportionate horror of defaulters, and, having learnt, from previous inquiries, that the Four-oak farm was on a good soil, and let at a moderate rent, he was by no means disposed to tolerate any arrears, unless valid and unanswerable reasons should be shown for the indulgence.

With this resolution in his heart, and no

very gracious expression on his face, he crossed the yard, and, seeing neither bell nor knocker, tapped with his cane upon the door, which was presently opened by a middle-aged woman, whose countenance, though sad, was by no means displeasing, and whose garments, in spite of darns and patches, presented a clean and decent appearance.

With a respectful curtsy she invited him in, and ran to bring a chair, wiping it carefully with her apron, when her visitant seated himself, gazing around him to take a survey of the premises before he stated the purpose for which he came. The floor of the spacious room into which he had been ushered was partly tiled and partly boarded, the whole being covered with a bright-red sand ; the ceiling was divided by two ponderous beams, from each of which hung a large wicker bird-cage, a few hams, numerous bundles of onions, and other farm-produce ; while the heavy projecting mantel-shelf over the yawning chimney was garnished with well-polished pots, pans, and candlesticks, surmounted by a huge fan of peacock's fea-

thers. Previously to the appearance of their unexpected visitant the farmer's eldest daughter, a pale pensive-looking girl of eighteen or nineteen, had been employed in churning; a second had been busily plucking a goose, and a little boy had been occupied in sorting the feathers; but the whole party now suspended their operations to gaze, with somewhat anxious looks and open mouths, upon the new comer. After having completed his survey of this scene, the merchant at length exclaimed, "My name is Adam Brown."

"Yes, Sir," said the farmer's wife, again curtsying, while her countenance assumed an expression of some alarm.

"And you are Mrs. Chubbs, I presume." A silent reverence signified assent. "Is this the whole of your family?"

"No, Squire; besides these three, I have a little girl, Sally, who be in the yard a milking, and a grown-up son who be with a maltster at Gloucester."

"Maintaining himself, then?"

"Yes, Squire."

‘Where’s your husband?’

“It’s market-day, and he be gone to Cheltenham.”

“Yours is a small farm, but the pasturage seems to be good, the soil excellent.”

“Yes, Squire.”

“And the rent is moderate?”

“Ye—yes, Squire,” hesitated the poor woman, who seemed to anticipate that her admissions would establish a case against herself.

“Why, then, Madam, how comes it that your rent is a year and a half in arrears? If that’s not a poser, I’ll trouble you for an answer. Ha! ha!” The stern look of the speaker, and the accompanying raps of his cane, so scared the party thus interrogated, that she stood for some time in a state of such confusion and distress as to be totally incapacitated from making any reply.

“Mayhap Squire,” she at length faltered in a timid voice, “you may ha’ heard that my good man be an old sodger—a Waterloo-man; if you should be at church next Sunday, you may see him in the third pew from the door, wearing his medal.”

“I recollect Master Waghorn, of the Green

Man, telling me of an old soldier who could drink two gallons of ale to his own cheek.— Was that your husband ?”

“ You see, Squire, when my poor dear John were a sodgering in foreign parts, sleeping out o’ nights and what not, without any covering to signify, and nothing to keep out the cold air, he were obligated to take a sip of brandy, or whatever of sich-like he could come anigh : and so it growed to be a habit,—I should say a disease ; and he can’t help hisself if he would ; and the money slips through his fingers, or is stolen from him when he be tipsy ; and so we come to be ahindhand in the rent : but he’s honest as the day, is poor John, and works like a slave when he be sober ; and so, Squire, if you’ll only be so good as to gie us a little time——”

“ Tush, woman ! you don’t mean to say that all his substance is turned into beer and grog at the Green Man.—If I thought so, I should tell Master Waghorn a bit of my mind that he might not like to hear.”

“ O dear heart ! no, no, it baint here that the mischief be done, but at Cheltenham. We can look arter him here, and keep him

sober enough, except just now and then on the club-nights."

"What does he do with himself, then, at Cheltenham?"

"Why, you see, Squire, once, and sometimes twice a week, we do load our market-cart wi' pork (we be famous for our pigs), and butter, and poultry, and cheese, and what not, which we have all been working early and late to get ready; and poor John do drive it over to Cheltenham, where he does his marketing as sober as a judge; and then a set of rapscallion market-people and others, who knows his weak side, gets about him, and takes him to the Golden Lion or the Chequers, and makes him tipsy, and 'tices him to play cards, and cheats him of every shilling, and then puts him into his cart; and if it wasn't for Wellington, who knows every step of the road quite as well as the postman, and my having had the cart painted white, so that folk may see it, and not run agin it, I don't know how poor dear John would ever find his way safe home."

"And who is Wellington?"

“La, Sir! I thought everybody knowed Wellington: it’s the horse my John rode at Waterloo, and he loves him all the same as if he were one of the family, and so we do all.—He bought him when the regiment were disbanded.”

“All this, my good woman, has nothing whatever to do with the matter in question. I am sorry to find that you have a drunken, idle, good-for-nothing husband.”

“Idle! good-for-nothing!” ejaculated the wife, prudently omitting all notice of the first epithet applied to him: “Oh, Squire! how could you think of saying such a thing? I won’t hear nobody say it without telling them to their face that it be a downright—what’s not true. There baint an industriouser, kinder-hearted creature in the world than John Chubbs—that is to say, when he be sober; and there baint nobody so sorry as hisself when he finds how he have been making ducks and drakes of his money. Why, poor fellow! I’ve seen him cry like a child when he looks at——Fanny dear! little Sal will ha’ done milking by this time;

—hadn't you better carry the pail to the dairy?"

As the eldest daughter walked out of the room, in accordance with this suggestion, Brown observed that she looked ill and unhappy. "Ah, poor girl! and well she may," exclaimed the mother with a sigh: "that's just what I was a coming to. She and young Harry Groombridge, the miller, have kept company together for some time, and they was to ha' been married afore this, but his father won't consent to his marrying the daughter of a drunkard; and so the poor girl is taking on fit to break her heart, and seems quite pining away like: Dr. Dawson do say she ought to take cordials and restoratives, and such-like; but, dear heart! where be we to get them, when everything be a going to rack and ruin?"

"Your daughter seems a very nice girl, Mrs. Chubbs, and, as I dare say she's a very good girl also, I am really sorry——"

"Good!" interposed the mother; "there baint such another nowhere. Such a one to churn and bake and manage a dairy, and

handles her needle like an angel!—If you do want to see something worth seeing, look out next Sunday for Harry's smock-frock that she worked for him, all in true blue, with two hearts and a true-lover's knot on each shoulder, and the letters H. G. on the sleeves. Do look out for it, Squire,—if you please, Sir; and see if you baint right glad that I told you on't."

"I cannot allow your husband to go on thus, while you are all toiling and drudging to no purpose. Tell him to come up to me to-morrow, that I may have a little talk with him. I'll have no more arrears. You yourself must confess that it's better he should pay the rent to me than squander it at the ale-house; and he must and shall do so, or I'll know the reason why. Ha, ha!" So saying, he arose, and quitted the room with the look of a man who had definitely made up his mind, and would not be turned from his purpose; while the poor woman followed him to the gate, imploring him to be lenient to her husband, who had but one fault, and protesting that she would work

her fingers to the bone rather than not pay the whole of the rent, if time were allowed them.

Unwilling to betray the softening effect of these eager intercessions,—for he thought that no indulgence ought to be extended to a confirmed drunkard,—Brown walked rapidly away, only relaxing his compressed lips to ejaculate, “Ah! these are the pleasures of matrimony: vastly agreeable! Well, well; thank Heaven, I have kept clear of that scrape: I never married.” Walk as fast as he could, however, he could not outstrip the pale sorrowful face of Fanny, which haunted him on his homeward path with its expression of mingled sickliness, sadness, and resignation. “That poor girl will sink,” he muttered to himself, “unless she has some comfortable restoratives to support her. The pothicary’s quite right: pills and drugs in these cases are all nonsense—nothing like generous diet. Odd enough, but so it is, that, when these gentlemen of the pestle and mortar have to deal with poor people, they generally prescribe rich cordials, chicken

dinners, choice wines, horse or carriage exercise, and an excursion to Bath, Brighton, or Cheltenham. Well, well ; we must see what we can do for her."

These soliloquies brought him to the Manor-House, where he called lustily and repeatedly for Mrs. Glossop, betaking himself with a hearty good will to the bell when he found that his vocal summons produced no effect. "Why, where the deuce have you been hiding yourself?" he demanded, on her bustling into the room: "I thought you were either dead and buried, or else that you had eloped with John Trotman."

"*Mon doo!* Sir," ejaculated the housekeeper, with a look of disdainful horror; "how could you think I should ever bemean myself to marry such a *cul de sac* as John? No, indeed; if ever I settle at all, it must be with a *haut ton*. I was so busy writing a *lettre de cachet* to a *chère amie*, that I never heard the bell, or I should have come sooner."

"Well, well; better late than never. What

was that famous posset you made for me when I was so confoundedly ill? Capital stuff! gave me a second life."

"It's a receipt of my own: all invented out of my own *amour propre*; and I call it caudle-cup."

"I want you to make a bottle of it,—a quart bottle or more,—and take it down to a poor girl that's very ill at the Four-oak Farm: and harkye, Mrs. Glossop; please to take the best Madeira, and put in plenty of spice and good things, and let her have more if she wants it; and look after her now and then, for I know you to be a famous nurse."

The housekeeper curtsied and retired, with a smirk of satisfaction upon her features, partly occasioned by the compliment to her abilities, and partly from the pleasant anticipation of the sanatory effect to be produced by the cordial which she had been instructed to concoct. Neither of these feelings, however, prevented her reperusal of the following letter, addressed to a friend in London, which she had just completed when she had been so suddenly called away:—

“ *O ma share* Mrs. Jellicoe !

“ Who would ever have thought that, after being born and bred in London, and living so many years with the Gubbinses in Finsbury Square, and travelling to *la bell France*, that mine, after all, should be a *fate shampaytre*, and that I should be doomed to live in the country, and a very ugly country too ? To talk of the beauty of Woodcote is, in the language of the *bo monde*, quite a *foe paw*. We started from London in our own *voiture*, quite like a *Milord Anglay* : and guess my indelible *je ne say quoi* when master would insist that I should ride inside, though I repeatedly exclaimed *point de two*, and *je ne voo paw* ; but he would persist : you know he is as obstinate as a *poste restante*, so I at last gave my consent by exclaiming *toot o contraire*, and jumped in.

“ You will observe, *ma share*, that I have become half a Frenchwoman, quite a *parley voo fransay* ; but I had no master at Paris, picking up everything by ear, so that I can’t quite answer for the spelling, which is no

odds, as the French never spell as they write, which I call looking one way and rowing another. Now, in English I peek myself upon my ornithology, and you will admit that my spelling is invariably accoorit. After all, I was glad to escape riding in the rumble along with John, who is by no means one of the *John comme il fo*, as the French say. When we arrived at Cheltenham the town was all alive, for it happend to be the day of the king's dissection, when he first came to the crown; so the soldiers were out, firing ever so many *few de joys*, and we met the kernel of the core prancing down the principal *roo*, as grand as if he were the autograph of all the Russias; and I really felt quite cowed when the alderney who was following him came prancing close up to the *voiture*, a swishing his tail like mad. What with the naying of the horses, and the drums and trumpets, and the church-bells, it was really what the French call a *bo spectacle*. But, *oh, ma share!* what lies the papers do tell, leading us to believe that this here very regiment had been cut to pieces

in the East Indies ! for only last week I myself read a paragraff stating that its headquarters had arrived from Bombay at Gravesend ; and here they were, all alive and kicking, and as merry as grigs.

“ *Grass a Doo !* we arrived all safe at Woodcote : but, oh ! what a ramshackle place is the Manor-House, *triste comme oon bonnet de knee*, as the French say ! They tell me it has been very much admired as a spessy-men of fine old English architecture. Architecture, indeed ! why, the housekeeper’s room has a worse look-out than the parlour, and has only one lock-up closet, and no pickle-cupboard, and no shelves for preserves ! You are a housekeeper yourself, *ma share* Mrs. Jellicoe, and can understand how much I must have been horrified at this *coo de grass*. Then there is an itch in the wall, just at the foot of my bed, which, *sang doute*, once contained an idle, worshipped by those nasty monks. The very sight of it put me in mind of old Scratch ; and as to sleeping, would you believe that they had put a bumpy hard old *matelot* on the bed, and an *oriley* to

match under my head ? so that it was hours
afore ever I sunk into Murphy's arms.
Adoo, ma share. I shall soon write again.
En attendong, je voo baize les main upon
both cheeks, and remain,

“*Toojooors a voo,*

“ MARY GLOSSOP.

“P.S. In reading over my letter I see that
I have written the king's *dissection*, but you
will of course discover that I meant the
king's *procession*. You would excuse the
fo paw if you knew what a bad pen I had
at the *momong*.”

CHAPTER VI.

IN the restless activity of the merchant's mind, and his resolution to see everything with his own eyes, and accomplish as much as possible with his own hands, he was everywhere where he ought not to be, and nowhere where he ought to be, often retarding the proceedings of the different workmen in his over-anxiety to expedite them. As there was a necessary cessation of these multifarious labours on the first Sunday after his arrival, the silence of the whole house, with the solitariness and absence of bustle in the domain as he walked round it before breakfast, enabled him to observe, for the first time, that the grey antiquated mansion, with its weather-beaten aspect, the grim-looking heads carved on the projecting corbels, and the ponderous encircling wall,

topped with ragged weeds, assumed, altogether, a rather forlorn, melancholy, and prison-like appearance. "A fellow should never go out before breakfast," he muttered to himself as he sate down to his substantial morning's meal: "when the stomach's empty the heart's empty, and everything looks half-starved and miserable. Those ugly stone-headed chaps under the roof appeared to be scowling down upon me with famished faces, as if they longed to crawl out of the wall and gobble me up. Hunger, they say, will eat through stone walls: no wonder, then, that it eats into the heart, and makes one dumpy and mopish. No, I won't turn out again till I can face the foul fiend with a good foundation of cocoa and cold meat in my stomach." A very solid basis of this nature having been secured, our merchant arrayed himself in his best cinnamon-coloured suit, and, having ordered the carriage to be got ready at the proper hour, he informed Trotman and Mrs. Glossop that, as the pew appertaining to the Manor-House was of ample dimensions, he should wish

them, and as many of the other servants as could be spared from home, to take their seats beside him. John gave a sailor-like assenting bow, and disappeared ; but the housekeeper received the proposition with a disconcerted look, and an exclamation of, " Dear me, Sir ! *O ciel !* You can't surely be serious ? it wouldn't at all be *apropos de bottes*. Why, I wouldn't do any such a thing for *point d'argent*—no, nor for twice as much. What would all the *comme il fo* of the neighbourhood think of such a particularly simultaneous proceeding ? and what would the *bah purple* say to it ? "

" What, Mrs. Glossop ! an't I independent ? an't I my own master ? Can you show me in the parish of Woodcote, or in the county of Gloucester, or in the whole world if you like, a man, woman, or child, be they high, low, jack, or the game, for whom I care one single brass farthing ? "

" No, Sir, *certainemong*. It's all very well abroad, where you've been so long a living, Sir, that the *canal* and the *comme il fos* should all go together to their Catholic

worship higgledy-piggledy, which I suppose is why they call it a mass; but indeed, and indeed, it's not at all the *alamode* way of going to church in this country."

"So much the worse. I thought we went to church to forswear pomps and vanities, not to wear them: to show that we are all of one faith and one family, and the children of one father—not to display our trumpery ranks and distinctions, and to separate into classes, and to divide the rich from the poor, as if we were not all to go to heaven by the same road and the same conveyance."

"Good gracious, Sir! what a singular *denoumoug*! If you were thus to make an omnibus of a church, I'm quite sure none of the *grand noblesse* would travel by it."

"Then I would leave them behind, that they might book themselves, if they chose, in the devil's diligence. For my part, I would have all the pews pulled down, and made into benches, that we might all sit cheek by jowl, looking at the parson and minding our devotion, instead of ogling one another, or falling asleep in our cushioned

and padded pews, as I have seen so many doing in the fashionable London chapels."

"*Ma foi!* Sir; you certainly have the strangest way of thinking;—but in course, if your orders are *de rigger*, as the French say, I shall make a pint of obeying them, though they're by no means *a la bone hoor*."

"When I give directions, Mrs. Glossop, I expect them to be followed, not discussed. Ha, ha "

The peremptory cane having confirmed this decision, the housekeeper hurried away to array herself in her most showy attire, arguing that, as she was to sit in the same pew with her master, it was only a proper mark of respect to him that she should be dizenied out in her best habiliments. Some drawback it was from the pride of this church collocation that she was to share it with the other domestics: determining, therefore, not to be confounded with them in proceeding to the sacred edifice, she walked to it alone, endeavouring, but in vain, not to look proud of her finery, and enjoying, with an inordinate though suppressed triumph, the gaping

admiration of the rustics as she flaunted through the village. As it was part of our merchant's religion to respect the religion of others, he invariably made his appearance in church some time before the commencement of the service, so that himself and his household formed the gapesight of the congregation as long as the bell continued tolling.

Although the Manor-House pew had been furnished with curtains in Lady Mayhew's time, those appurtenances had subsequently disappeared: there was nothing, therefore, to screen the present occupants from observation, and most liberally was it dispensed; for in this sequestered village, where most of the church-goers were attired in smock-frocks, the apparition of the "new Squire" and his attendants was an occurrence that excited the curiosity of the whole congregation. All eyes converged towards the spot where they sat, not always unaccompanied by a furtive nudging of elbows: a low whisper ran from pew to pew; and more than once, from the quarter where the young females predominated, was heard something

like a half-suppressed titter; all which irreverent sounds instantly ceased on the appearance of the clergyman, who discharged the duties of his sacred office with a zealous and almost paternal solicitude that had secured to him the love and respect of the whole neighbourhood.

After the worthy pastor, the most interesting object in that rural church was the benevolent-looking Mrs. Latimer; her beaming and affectionate eyes gazing alternately upon her twin sons, who carefully supported her along the aisle, as if she were mentally ejaculating, not without a touch of pride in her tenderness, "These are my good and noble boys—the supporters not of my decrepit form alone, but of my heart, my soul, my very existence." All drew up, or stood respectfully aside, to let them pass; for though their rustic neighbours might now and then indulge in a laugh or a sneer at the expense of their humble equipage, the Latimer family were beloved by the whole village. Behind them walked Captain Molloy, evidently impatient at his inability to throw out his leg

with his usual strut and shake of the knee, but making amends by expanding his buttoned-up chest, and elevating his bald head with an additional pomposity. His daughters followed,—Matilda ruffling the plumes of her cheap finery, while she bridled and sidled in the attempt to win the attention of Allan Latimer, whom she had been vainly ogling during the service ;—Ellen, in a dress of modest neatness, slowly pacing with downcast eyes until she ventured to steal a furtive glance at Walter.

In a secluded village even the appearance of a new horse is a momentous occurrence—so much so that a little knot of rustics was collected round the cob, after the conclusion of the service, discussing his various points, and looking into his mouth to ascertain his age, when the Captain came up, exclaiming, as he patted him caressingly on the shoulder, “A capital little nag indeed! ’Tilda dear! doesn’t he remind you of the famous black cob I had in Ireland, that was given to me by—was it the Duke, or Lord Ormonde? No matter, I never used him except as a mere

hack. He must have been half a hand higher than this little fellow. Ah! I shall never see such another." Whatever might have been the effect of this braggadocio strain upon the bystanders, it elicited no reply from the Latimers, who bowed politely to himself, more cordially to his daughters, and drove away.

The good-tempered Adam Brown, who had not forgotten the earnest solicitation of Mrs. Chubbs, gazed around, as he left the church, for the smock-frock of Harry Groombridge, with its embroidered hearts and true-lovers' knots, and soon discovered its wearer, a good-looking young man, waiting by the door to have a little chat with his sweetheart, ere she mounted the market-cart in which her father usually drove her home, the farm being at some distance from the church. John Chubbs himself, a fine soldierly figure, decently attired in his Sunday gear, and wearing his Waterloo medal, drew up as 'the Squire' left the church, and gave him a military salute with his hand; after which he lost no time in hurrying towards his cart, lest he should be asked why he had never

made his appearance at the Manor-House as requested. His wife had delivered Brown's message to that effect ; but John, who was an old soldier in every sense of the word, and who well knew the purport of the invitation, was by no means anxious to receive a severe rating for his intemperate habits, followed, probably, by an inconvenient demand for the overdue rent.

On the low wooden memorial of a former friend and fellow-labourer, whose grave he had dug, sate Bat Ruggles the sexton, chuckling, and coughing, and grinning, with a vacant satisfaction, whenever, as he peered into the faces of the passers-by, he detected such traces of sickness or superannuation as promised him an early job, and a consequent carouse with his pipe and pot at the Green Man. His own age and infirmities might have suggested that he was not unlikely to be committed to the earth sooner than his anticipated victims ; but if any such thought ever crossed his careless mind, it did not by any means check his cackling and crowing. Looking upon his fellow-creatures as so

much food for the grave, he considered every new grave as so much drink for himself; and as men were sure to die, he saw before him an indefinite succession of tipplings,—a prospect which accounted for his habitual cheerfulness.

On such an eventful Sunday as that which we have been describing, it was hardly to be expected that the churchyard would be speedily evacuated, especially by the red-cloaked and black-bonneted females of the parish. A little knot of these crones and gossips lingered for some time in one corner of the enclosure, commenting with great eagerness on the all-absorbing subject of the new Squire and his household. “Don’t tell me,” cried one, shaking her head with a condemnatory significance—“if that stuck-up fat creature baint the Squoire’s wife, it be his mistress; mark my words if she baint. D’ye think he’d a let her sit in the same pew if she warn’t? not he!”

“Well, Mrs. Diggins,” said a second, “I never speaks ill of no one, ’specially them as I don’t know; but I must say it do look un-

common like : and if so be that it be so, why, then it's a burning shame, and I doan't care a pinch o' snuff who hear me say so."

"You han't got a pinch about you, Mrs. Dobbs, have you?" inquired a third, whose nose seemed to have been stimulated by the last expression. A tin box having been produced, with a convenient division for the reception of tobacco, and the whole party having taken a pinch of Scotch rappee, the last speaker continued ;—"I do s'pose Madam's fine shawl were meant for rael Indgy ; but, bless your heart, Mrs. Dobbs ! it's no more Indgy than my scarlet cloak." "And as for her fine silk layloc gownd," croaked a third, "I say, sure as ever I stond here, that it be an old un dyed. What do *you* say, Mrs. Tapps?"

"No doubt on it, none in the varsal world : and I wouldn't mind being upon my Bible oath that the watch stuck in her girdle were only copper.—And what call, I should like to know, has a creature like that for a par-asol and a veil? She han't got much complexion to spile, I can tell her." In this

strain the colloquy proceeded for some time, the assembled conclave being unanimous in reprobating the monstrous innovation of "a creature" like Mrs. Glossop taking her seat in the Squire's pew, whether she were only his housekeeper, or occupying the less respectable station which their suspicions had so unjustly assigned to her.

Remarkable is the sympathy between the great and little vulgar of English society in their intolerance of the smallest deviations from established modes, usages, and observances. In this respect all classes, with only individual exceptions, are stanch conservatives, condemning every deviation from customary forms and etiquette as angrily as if it were a moral offence. At the principal gate of the churchyard had been stationed a gorgeous coach, the conspicuous arms covered with quarterings enclosed in a mantle purposely fashioned to assume the appearance of supporters, the sleek stately horses bedizened with plate-harness, and the servants making quite a "flare-up" among the smock-frocks of the rustics, by the contrast of their flaunt-

ing liveries. This equipage appertained to Sir Gregory Cavendish, the occupant of a large mansion in the neighbourhood, who sought to bury in oblivion his low civic origin by an ostentatious display of his wealth, and an affectation of aristocratic exclusiveness. Gout, whose visits will not be repulsed even by the offensive *hauteur* of a rich upstart, had confined the baronet to his arm-chair at home; but his son and daughter had condescended to occupy a decorated pew in the church, where they were screened from the contaminating gaze of the profane vulgar by crimson curtains, and could humble themselves, as they imagined, before their Creator, by a display of pride and arrogance towards their fellow-creatures.

As they approached their carriage after the conclusion of the service, the dandy son, whose white kid forefinger was passed through the ring of an eye-glass, raised it slowly up in order to take a farewell survey of Brown and his household, drawling out,

as he finished the process, "Pawsitively the most extror'nary ménage, or rather menagerie, I have seen since we visited the Zoological Gardens. I wonder whether that creature with the abawminable cherry ribbons is the female of that male animal with the cinnamon-coloured hide."

"Mrs. Sidney, my maid," replied the sister, "tells me that she is his housekeeper, and the others who sat in the same pew with him were evidently common servants. Did you ever! it really makes one sick. Faugh!" And the fair speaker held her golden *bouquetière* to her nose with a most distasteful expression.

"What a parteecularly nasty fellah!" resumed the brother. "Some radical rascal, I dare say, who would reduce us all to his own rank."

"Well, we should be safe there, Algernon, for he couldn't well reduce us any lower."

"He, he! parteecularly good, Augusta: I must tell that to the Baronet when we get home."

“That red-faced housekeeper, with her antediluvian bonnet, reminded me of Henry the Seventh’s Chapel.”

“How uncawmonly mysterious! Why so?”

“Because she’s a fine specimen of the florid Gothic.”

“He, he! capital! Raily you’re quite in force this morning. I must tell that to the Baronet. Did you ever see such a carriage and horses, except poor Mrs. Latimer’s fly? Look! the male animal is talking to that snarling cur old Crab—‘sure such a pair were never seen,’ except Gog and Magog in Guildhall. He, he! Pawn my honour! I think we are both rather witty this morning.”

“How exceedingly providential, dear Algernon, that we determined not to call on this horrid man! What would the Countess have said had she seen us speaking to him? I shudder to think of it.”—With these words the horrified Augusta stepped into the carriage, followed by her brother, both amusing themselves during their drive home by ridi-

culing Adam Brown and his "menagerie," in a spirit quite as vulgar and illiberal, though in rather more polished language, than that which had been manifested by the village crones and gossips in the churchyard.

The object of all this curiosity and comment, who little dreamed of the innuendoes he was occasioning, and who would have been perfectly indifferent to them had he heard every word that was uttered in the course of the morning, remained for some little time chatting with Mr. Crab, who had already won favour in his sight by his pungent rebukes of the pompous and boastful Captain Molloy. As he had intended to call at Monkwell, he offered to take its owner home in his carriage, a proposition which was courteously accepted, and the two seniors, as they were driving towards it, fell into a friendly conversation. "Some of those were woundy wipes, hard hits, home thrusts, that you gave the Captain," said Adam, chuckling at the recollection.

"His audacious and impudent inventions were insults to the whole company, or I

should not have retorted upon him so sharply. The Captain knows that I never suffer his braggadocios to pass unquestioned or unridiculed, yet he will challenge me to attack them,—a defiance that provokes me, though I endeavour to thrust at him obliquely, and not expose him more than I can help; we understand one another perfectly. Pray don't fancy that I am always the sour, caustic, cynical old fellow that you may have thought me from our last interview, or that you may have heard me described by others. Pride, pretension, and folly, when they become obtrusive, do move my spleen beyond my power to control it; but, like other old dogs, I neither snarl, nor bark, nor bite, when people let me alone."

"The Captain, I fear, seldom allows you much respite, for he seems to be an incorrigible swaggerer. And this reminds me to ask you who was the finical jackadandy that stared at me so rudely through his eye-glass, and then lounged with such a lackadaisical air into a sort of Brummagem Lord Mayor's coach?"

"That, Sir, is a man of no small consequence in the opinion of the neighbourhood, of immeasurable importance in his own, being the son and heir of the hidalgo, the magnifico, the high-mightiness of the whole district, Sir Gregory Cavendish of Cavendish Hall, whom not to know argues thyself unknown."

"I never heard of him nevertheless. Who is he? who was he?"

"I have answered the first question already, but I hardly dare give you a reply to the second, for it involves an irremissible offence, and Sir Gregory is both powerful and unforgiving. O, Mr. Brown! I could a tale unfold whose lightest word would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood—"

"But my blood's all old."

"True, true,—that makes a difference. Well, then, as we are all alone—your coachman has not quick ears, has he?"

"Deaf as a haddock."

"Good! and your footman?"

"Never listens to anything he isn't meant to hear."

“Better still. Well, then, Mr. Brown, list, list, Oh list!” Crab here assumed a look of deep solemnity that might have startled his companion had not a twinkle of malicious pleasantry lighted up his little eyes as he continued: “Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Ashkelon—but the grand, the redoubtable Sir Gregory Cavendish was once Sir Gregory Gible!!” at the mention of which words the speaker recoiled into the corner of the carriage as if he were astounded at his own audacity in making the revelation.

“Gregory Gible? When I was a druggist’s apprentice I knew a fellow of that name—a great dealer in Irish butter in the Minories.”

“That’s the very man.”

“You don’t mean it?”

“Your pardon, Mr. Brown, I do mean it.”

“Odsbobs! I know the chap’s whole history. First a warehouseman, then a clerk, then married his master’s widow, then got the business, then took the great Irish butter contract for the navy, and became at last a wealthy man; bought a borough, always

voted with the ministers,—and there I left him when I last went to Smyrna.”

“Then I must supply you with the remainder of his history, which is soon told. His votes procured him a baronetcy; his wealth enabled him to retire from business; he built a fine mansion in this vicinity; and, setting himself up for an aristocrat and a high-caste exclusive, he is proportionately horrified when any allusion is made to his original trade and station.”

“But whence came his new name?”

“Heaven knows. He chose to change, and doubtless thought that he might as well take a good one, and leave the Giblet as far behind him as he possibly could.”

“I should have thought him less of a goose nevertheless had he stuck to it. Only to think of Gregory Giblet—I beg his pardon, I mean Sir Gregory Cavendish,—being a great man and a neighbour of mine! I suppose he means to cut me, though I am an old friend. Do you think he will condescend to do me the honour of calling at the Manor-House?”

“As he certainly ought to do so, I rather suspect that he will not.”

“But I may call upon him; at all events I will. It may afford us some amusement. He! he!”

This colloquy brought them to Monkwell, a small old-fashioned house, where the visitor was introduced to Mrs. Crab, a small, old-fashioned lady, sitting in an easy chair, and reading a small old-fashioned bible with the assistance of spectacles. Everything appertaining to this establishment was rather little and rather antiquated, not even excepting the servants, who were evidently old dependants of the family, and whose welcoming smiles, as their master returned to his quiet sequestered abode, afforded a sufficient proof that he was of a kind and gentle nature at home, however keen and caustic he might be in the houses of others. The wife's affectionate looks, and the husband's tender inquiries as he wheeled her about in her easy chair, ministering to her wants and endeavouring to anticipate her wishes,—no very easy task in the case of a querulous and

somewhat fanciful invalid,—supplied strong confirmations of Crab's inherent kindliness of disposition, although he was almost universally reputed to be an ill-tempered cynic.

His wife, who was by no means free from the besetting sin of invalids, a tendency to dwell upon their own ailments, was rather more diffuse in this indulgence than suited the taste of her visitant, whose annoyance was not diminished when the husband whispered that her health had been originally undermined by mental anxiety and distress, arising from the long illness and subsequent death of an only child. Though of a genial and kind nature, Brown was not a person of refinement or of very delicate sympathy, so that he could not enter into the feelings of Crab, who looked upon these complainings as the natural out-pourings and relief of sickness, a sort of vocal tears, which he even found an interest in watching, since they indicated the nature and direction of his wife's sufferings, and thus enabled him to apply whatever remedies or solace her case would admit. It was his melancholy and

yet not ungratifying office "to rock the cradle of declining age,"—a duty discharged with a tender solicitude for which no one would give him credit who had not been admitted within the walls of Monkwell, and seen him in the society of his wife.

"Tush!" petulantly ejaculated the merchant, when he was again seated in his carriage, "that woman is worse than 'poor dear Mrs. Neverwell' in the farce, who had taken all the bottles in the doctor's shop. Talks of nothing but herself and her maladies. What a life for poor Crab! As well live in an hospital." And then, as he reverted to his own happy exemption from all these domestic trials, the triumph with which he invariably chuckled over his lucky bachelorship broke out in energetic exclamations of "Well, thank God, *I* was never such a fool as to marry; *I* never lost an only child; *I* never had a sick, physic-taking, croaking wife.—Ha! ha!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE proprietor of the Manor-House, who rarely deviated from the habits he had acquired in earlier life, however inconsistent with the fashions of the day or with his present position in society, dined regularly at four o'clock, solacing himself afterwards with a pint of full-bodied port, which he found more hearty and congenial than the older and more attenuated wine so prized by professed epicures, and Brown never exceeded his prescribed quantity. Indeed he was methodical and exact in everything,—a fact which we have pleasure in recording, because we have generally observed that a love of material order involves a love of moral order. The platform and the low rails that surrounded the belfry on the top of the house having now been repaired, he had smoked his after-

noon chibouque in it several times, accompanied by John Trotman, who filled his amber bowl with the best Turkish tobacco, and whom he generally detained because he found him a good listener, in the intervals of his smoke-puffs, to his stories about olden times, and his adventures on board the *Arethusa*, or at Smyrna.

On one of these occasions John, having seen his master well supplied with every requisite, was about to leave him, when he was called back by the question, "What are you running away for? sit down, can't you? I had another chair brought up on purpose. I hate to see fellows standing when I'm sitting." John shook his head and pushed the chair away from him. "Whew!" cried the merchant, taking the amber from his mouth; "you're not going to mutiny, are you? You won't sit down! Who the deuce has put this nonsense into your head?"

"Mr. Jackson won't allow Sir Gregory to call, because you sit down with me."

"And who may Mr. Jackson be?"

"Sir Gregory's head man. Makes no odds,

he says, for a butler; but to sit down with a livery-servant,—no go!”

“John Trotman, you’re a fool! What the dickens, you stupid fellow! mayn’t I do as I like in my own house?” A shake of the head gave a negative reply.

“But, John, I don’t consider you merely as a servant. When I was knocked overboard by the swinging of that cursed boom off Civita Vecchia, and all the rest of the sailors were running, and swearing, and jabbering to lower the boat, didn’t you, without waiting a moment, or uttering a single word, jump into the water after me?”

“Done same for black cook.”

“I know you would have done the same for the black cook, but that does not cancel the obligation conferred on me.”

“Didn’t save you, saved yourself.”

“Yes, because I’m a good swimmer; but your good intentions were all the same.”

“Had none—didn’t know ’twas you.—Flummery!”

“Lookye, John Trotman; I hate to be contradicted, and I won’t be contradicted: so

hold your tongue and sit down directly. You shake your head, do you? You won't sit down?—Why, zounds! this is downright rebellion; and I've a great mind to give you warning."

"No such thing," replied John: with which words he made a bow and walked quietly away, though repeatedly commanded to stop. The man was perfectly right in what he said,—his master had not the smallest intention to give him warning; and this quarrel accordingly, like many preceding ones of a still graver character, proved only momentary, and passed off without any further allusion to it. As Brown never forgot a favour, however old might be its date, he found it much more difficult to forgive himself than his man, when the doggedness of the latter, or his own petulant obstinacy, had involved them in a squabble.

Among many good traits, Brown's besetting foibles were a profound reverence for wealth, and an unfastidious eye, not to say a positive obliquity of vision, as to the mode of its acquisition, if it were "in the

way of business,"—a saving and a very sweeping clause in his moral code. Hence his still-cherished respect for Sir Gregory Cavendish, notwithstanding Crab's disparaging mention of that worthy: hence his undisguised admiration of the juggling manœuvres by which Sir Gregory was reported to have outwitted the government in his contracts: hence his sudden resolution to call and renew his acquaintance with the Baronet, whose residence was not far from Gloucester. According to established forms, the first visit should have proceeded from Sir Gregory; but Adam despised etiquette, was curious to see how he would be received, and cared little or nothing as to the results of the overture he was about to make; so he drove over, to seek an interview with the rich proprietor of Cavendish Hall.

In this stately mansion everything was expressly calculated to display the powers, assert the supremacy, and challenge an admiration of opulence; a disregard of expense being much more manifest than any indication of taste in the general style of the

building, or in the details of the establishment. Powdered servants in flaring liveries, with embroidered shoulderknots and elbow-bobbing tags, ushered our visitant to the head of the stairs, where he was received by the butler or managing man, the consequential Mr. Jackson, at sight of whom he grasped his cane with a firmer clutch, as if he would have chastised him on the spot for his impertinent speech to Trotman. With a disdainful upturning of the nose, the butler eyed the new comer from top to toe, gave a slight shrug of the shoulders, received his name, announced him to the occupants of the drawing-room, closed the door, and took a hasty pinch of snuff, exclaiming, "What does the old quiz mean by calling at the Hall? We sha'n't visit him, I can tell him that."

On entering the spacious and gaudy drawing-room, so tricked out with embroidered ottomans, and fancy stools, and gewgaw settees, that it was difficult to find anything solid or safe to sit down upon, our visitant found the Baronet in his easy-chair,

with his gouty legs supported upon stools ; the Countess of Trumpington, a morning visiter, who paid assiduous court to the family, and flattered all their foibles, in the hope of securing Augusta and her fortune for her own profligate and penniless son ; together with Sir Gregory's dandy heir and affected daughter. Surprise and dismay sat upon the countenances of the two latter, as they heard the name of their visitant, and recollected that the Countess, their only titled friend, was in the room. " Angels and ministers of grace defend us !" whispered Algernon, hastily uplifting his eye-glass ; " pawsitively here's the strange beast, the nondescript male animal, that we saw last Sunday. Raily, now, people of rank and condition must cease going to church if they are to meet such horrid vulgarians."

" Give me my salts, Algernon," exclaimed the sister, in the same subdued voice ; " I shall faint,—I feel that I shall faint if the Countess——cannot we draw off her attention ?—How dreadfully unlucky !—What *shall* we do ?"

“Sorry, Sir Gregory, to see you tied by the leg,” said Brown, after having at length seated himself in the only chair that seemed calculated to support him. “Odsbobs! I had nearly knocked down one of these daddy-long-legs tables,—difficult steerage through such an archipelago of kickshaws, nicknacks, and crinkum-crankums. Don’t recollect me, I dare say. Well, I shouldn’t have known you. Time plays the very deuce with us old fellows! My name’s Adam Brown;—d’ye remember Adam Brown, the chemist and druggist’s apprentice, in Aldgate?”

Sir Gregory gave him an alarmed and suspicious glance, became somewhat fidgety in his seat, grew rather red in the face, but said nothing, not having yet quite determined how to act. “Tush, man! you can’t have forgotten me. You and I were cronies, you know. Well, I went out to Smyrna and the Levant as supercargo;—taken into partnership; became head of the firm,—Brown, Gubbins, and Co.;—heard of *them*, I reckon!—made a fortune in business, and come to

settle at Woodcote, because I ran away from it when I was a poticary's physic-boy, with only seven-and-ninepence in my pocket.—What d'ye think of that? Ha! ha!”

“What a parteicularly detestable wretch! We must pawsitively kick the fellah,” said Algernon, in his sister's ear.

“I shall die! I shall sink into the earth if you don't get the horrid creature out of the room,” was the reply. The Baronet, who was every minute growing more fidgety and getting redder in the face, at length said, in a faltering voice, and without venturing to look at his tormentor, “I believe, Sir, there must be some great mistake; never saw you afore; never knew anybody of the name of Adam Brown.”

“Pooh, pooh! don't tell me: know better. You have forgotten yourself, not me. Think again; think of the Irish butter warehouse in Aldgate.” Lady Trumington, who was perfectly well acquainted with the Baronet's origin, and who saw a storm brewing upon his fiery features, endeavoured to turn the conversation by suddenly ex-

claiming, "My dear Sir Gregory Cavenish, you really must accede to the wishes of the whole county, and suffer yourself to be put in nomination; for, you know, an immediate dissolution is expected. We must have a man of title and distinction; we cannot submit to the disgrace of being any longer represented by a low fellow, a mere merchant."

As this was touching Brown, however unintentionally, in the very apple of his eye, he instantly abandoned his attack upon the Baronet, and, turning towards the Countess, sternly exclaimed, "What, Madam, call a man a low fellow for being a merchant! Why, in this mercantile country, it's the highest, and noblest, and best title to which a fellow can aspire. Merchants, Madam, I would have you to know, are the greatest benefactors of mankind, by bringing distant nations acquainted with each other, and civilising them; and making the superfluities of one supply the wants of the other; and spreading arts, and knowledge, and science, and all that sort of thing, over

the whole world. Zooks, Madam ! where would be half your great charities without our rich merchants ? Look at Guy's,—look at Whittington and his cat, and Sir Thomas Gresham and his grasshopper, and scores of others ; and then, Madam, you will perhaps condescend to look less sourly at me, Adam Brown, late of the firm of Brown, Gubbins, and Co."

This tirade, delivered with a vehemence that betrayed very little respect for the rank of the party addressed, having determined the Baronet to disclaim all previous acquaintance with its utterer, he plucked up his courage, and, looking as little terrified as he could, exclaimed in a pompous tone, " Mr. Black,—I think you said your name was——"

" Black me no Blacks : my name's Adam Brown ; and that name you know as well as I do."

" Well then, Mr. Brown, allow me to tell you that you are labouring under a sad mistake. I never saw you in my life,—never knew any one of the name of Brown. How

do I know that your name is Brown ? You may be an impostor."

"And you *are* one," cried Brown, firing at the term,—“a sham, a counterfeit, a Brummagem.—Nay, it's no use your starting, and staring, and getting as red in the gills as a turkey-cock. You're no true Cavendish, I tell you,—your real name is Gregory Gibleet.” A faint scream burst from Augusta, as she ejaculated, “Oh the horrid, low, scandalous libeller ! Dear Lady Trumpington ! I hope you don't believe a syllable of what he says. The wretch wants to extort money from papa by charging him with this odious name. Algernon, why don't you have him turned out of the room ?”

“Allow me, Sir, to assure you that you are raily redeeculously mistaken,” said the brother ; “and permit me at the same time to have the very uncawmon pleasure of opening the door for your voluntary exit, unless you should prefer a compulsory one.”

“Mistaken !” resumed Brown ; “why, don't I see the very wart on your father's nose that I once covered with ink when he fell asleep in the back shop ?”

"Many people, and very clever people too, have been deceived as to personal identity," observed the Countess, willing to spare any further exposure.

"Lord love you, Madam! there's no mistake. Why, Sir Gregory, don't you remember your falling off the ladder with a tub of butter, and being brought into our shop all covered with blood,—I was a chemist's shopman then, Madam,—and my calling you ever after Gory Gible, instead of Gregory Gible? And a very good joke it was."

"Where's Jackson? where are the servants? Algernon, ring the bell!" cried the Baronet, in an agony at these most inopportune reminiscences. "Really, Mr. Black, this beats everything from a person upon whom I never before set my eyes! Oh, Jackson, here you are at last. Take away this fellow, and never let him darken my doors again. How dare you let him in? Take him away, take him away; kick him down stairs."

"Yes, Sir Gregory; certainly, Sir Gregory," replied the managing man, again

ringing the bell: "I'll order the servants,— I have nothing to do with the stairs. Here, John, Thomas, Joseph."

"And, harkye, Jackson!" cried the dandy son, receding from the immediate scene of action as he spoke; "you may as well tell them to introduce the gentleman to the horse-pond when he has got to the bottom of the stairs."

Augusta had sunk into a chair at the further corner of the room, holding a bottle of salts to her nose; the Countess, affecting to look profoundly horrified, although in reality she was not unamused at the absurdity of the scene, placed herself upon a settee and quietly awaited its *dénouement*; and in the mean while three livery servants, having received orders to that effect from their commanding officer, Mr. Jackson, approached the author of all this disturbance with the apparent purpose of executing a forcible ejection.

"Paws off, rascals!" cried Brown, clapping his hat on his head and brandishing his cane, "or I'll break every bone in your bodies. I'm

much more anxious to go than you can be to turn me out." With which words he made two or three sturdy steps towards the door, when he stopped, took off his hat, and said in a less excited voice, as he turned round and bowed to the Countess and Augusta, "Ladies, I hope you're not frightened. I'm not come to beg, borrow, nor steal; and I shall go away as quietly as I came; but, when a fellow's disowned by one of his earliest friends, called an impostor, and threatened with being introduced to the horse-pond in return for a civil visit, no wonder if he gets into a bit of passion." Replacing his hat he strode forwards towards the door, which was held wide open by the major-domo, at sight of whom he again flourished his cane in such a menacing way, that the functionary in question started back so suddenly as to knock his head with considerable violence against the bracket of a chandelier.

"I can tell by the sound," cried Brown, "that there is nothing in that empty noddle of yours; so I conclude you are Mr. Jackson, the jackanapes who was so shocked at my

allowing John Trotman to sit down with me. Harkye, sirrah ! I had much rather sit down with an honest man in livery than with a saucy knave out of it ; so mind you never presume to take a chair in my presence."

He had now reached the door, but ere he quitted the apartment he again turned round, crying out to the Baronet, " Well, my old friend, Gory Gibley,—Beg pardon, I mean Sir Gregory Cavendish, Baronet !—if you had called upon me in the canvass apron and sleeves that you wore when first I knew you, I should have given you a hearty welcome, instead of threatening you with the horse-pond or a kicking. A kicking, truly ! will *you* be kind enough to bestow it upon me,—or *you*, sir,—or *you* ?" These words were severally addressed with a courteous bow to each of the footmen, but, as they unanimously declined an affirmative answer, notwithstanding the polite solicitation of his manner, he walked deliberately down-stairs, entered his carriage, and was driven homewards. His chafing mood vented itself at first in contemptuous ridicule of

the Baronet's vanity, insolence, and folly, and of the subjection in which he was held by his family,—ebullitions which were so far successful in appeasing his wrath, that he was presently enabled to chuckle at the consternation he had excited in the whole establishment. Other reflections assisted in restoring his good humour, and, as he never lost an opportunity of felicitating himself on the happiness of his bachelor estate, he exclaimed, in great triumph of spirit, “ Well, *I* have no dandy fool of a son, no conceited minx of a daughter, to turn my head, and make a fool of me by attempting to persuade me that I am a fine gentleman. *I* was never caught in the noose of matrimony,—*I* never married. Ha ! ha ! ”

Lady Trumpington, although unacquainted with all the details of the Baronet's early history, knew perfectly well, as we have already intimated, that he had sprung from nothing, and had originally borne the name of Giblet, so that she fully believed the truth of the little episodes to which Brown had made allusion. But she was also fully aware

of the Baronet's weakness; she knew how to play her cards in every sense; and experience having taught her that the most irresistible flattery is that which is the least merited, she dilated for some time on the antiquity of the Cavendish family, with which, as she asserted, some of her ancestors had once the honour of being connected, and affected to treat the revelations of the recent visitant as the ravings of a disordered intellect. This consolatory solution was eagerly seized by Sir Gregory and his family, the former declaring that he had detected it instantly in the fellow's wild eye and furious gestures; while Algernon affirmed that nothing but compassion for his unhappy state had prevented his kicking him down-stairs; though he forgot to explain how this feeling could be reconciled with the orders to that effect which he had issued to the majordomo. The last-mentioned "gentleman's gentleman," who had been solely engaged because he had once lived in a nobleman's family, and was presumed to understand the proper management

of a household of distinction, was so much flustered by the danger he had incurred, and the knock he had received from the bracket, that he was fain to swallow two glasses of Madeira and retire to his room for the remainder of the day. Wealth, in-occupation, overfeeding, indolence, and gout had so weakened the faculties of Sir Gregory, that he had become a mere puppet in the hands of his family, and his factotum, Jackson. Had he retained the shrewdness of his early days, he might have known that no man is ridiculous for what he is, but for pretending to be what he is not. In this age of universal publicity, disguises are always foolish, because they are always vain. "Were we," says Rochefoucault, "to take as much pains to *be* what we ought as to disguise what we *are*, we might appear like ourselves without being at the trouble of any disguise at all,"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE most frequent inmates of the Manor-House, whether as guests or morning visitors, were the Latimer family. There was not much congeniality of taste between Adam Brown and them, their respective pursuits and habits having hitherto been as dissimilar as possible; but he was in want of their society, he felt most amicably disposed towards them, and, where these tendencies exist, the sympathies of our common nature will soon blend the most opposite characters into a cordial intimacy. So placid, so good, so affectionate a creature as the mother, it was impossible not to love; but, notwithstanding her perfect resignation to her fate, and the gratitude she constantly expressed for the blessings she enjoyed, there was a

tone of pensiveness, an occasional melancholy in her quietude, which displeased the merchant. It is worthy of remark that, when persons are in any way affected with a depression of spirits, the irritability usually accompanying that frame of mind is more especially manifested towards those who are labouring under a similar affection. The sadness or *ennui* in others that aggravates their own is an annoyance; they seem to think it an impertinence that anybody should be moping but themselves; they want to be amused and roused out of their tristful moods, not to be confirmed in them by the influence of sympathetic dulness; hence they find nothing so provoking as the sight of a rueful visage, and the presence of a taciturn or gloomy companion.

After the first bustle of his instalment had subsided, after all the remarkable places in the neighbourhood had been visited, and the novelty incident to his change of life had ceased to stimulate a mind craving for some other excitement when it could no longer find incessant occupation, Adam Brown

began to discover that, in having his whole time thrown upon his hands, he had a very rickety, troublesome, and insatiable child to nurse. Occasional dejections of mind, to which he had hitherto been a stranger, were the consequence of his compulsory idleness, while the inability to shake off these conscious frettings of a spirit, which, though it would not easily wear out, soon began to rust out, rendered him peevish and splenetic,—an infirmity which first visited itself upon poor Mrs. Latimer. “Zooks, Madam !” he petulantly exclaimed, after they had both maintained a silence of some little duration, “it’s your turn to speak next ; why do you imitate John Trotman, and play mumchance in this way, when I have been talking till I am almost broken-winded ?”

“Indeed, Sir ! I was thinking that I had hardly heard your voice this morning.”

“No wonder, Madam, when you keep your own mouth as close as a mouse-trap. A fellow can’t talk to himself for half an hour at a time, like those strutting and ranting fellows one sees on the stage.”

“Certainly not, but it seemed to me that you were a cup too low to-day, and I was afraid—”

“A cup too low ! what do you mean by that ? Never had the dumps, nor the dismals, nor the blue devils in all my life. Not such a fool, when I’ve got everything to make me happy. If there’s one thing I hate more than another, it is a dismal, dumpish, down-in-the-mouth, and all-for-nothing melancholy.”

“There I agree with you ; such a discontented feeling is a sort of ingratitude to Heaven. I hope I never give way to it. It would be very wrong in me.”

“Then, why do you put on such a woe-begone face, and sit there staring at the fender without throwing a word at me, good, bad, or indifferent ? Odsbobs, Madam ! I had rather be abused like a pickpocket than moped and bored.”

“I really beg your pardon if I have unintentionally added to your dejection.”

“There you go again ! I tell you I have no dejection. Never was in better

spirits,—quite rampant, hilarious, uproarious.”

“To confess the truth, I believe I was thinking at the moment of my poor dear husband.”

“More shame for you! When you are in my company, Mrs. Latimer, I don’t want any such thoughts. They are all very well at home, but you should put on a gayer mind, just as you put on a gayer dress, when you go a visiting. If you have anything pleasant, I’ll trouble you; when you have got the doldrums, you may keep them to yourself. I don’t want to say anything rude or personal—far from it—but I never was fond of a slow coach; so prithee, my good Mrs. Latimer, try to be as cheerful and as wide-awake as I am.”

Such reproaches and exhortations are very apt to aggravate the evil they would remedy, for nobody can be mirthful at command, and the fact of our depression being noticed only tends to increase it. The present instance, however, was the exception that confirmed the rule, for Mrs. Latimer,

in smiling obedience to the injunction she had received, began to talk away with unusual volubility,—an effort which she continued until an audible snore from the companion who had just boasted of being so wide-awake warned her that she was racking her brain and wasting her breath for nothing. These attacks of morning drowsiness had recently begun to steal over our retired merchant, while a long nap after dinner had become a matter of course.

His restless activity, which “deemed nought done while aught remained to do,” had put the mechanical genius and the amateur carpentry of Walter in constant requisition, so that scarcely a day passed in which he had not spent several hours in the Manor-House, planning, executing, or superintending the alterations and improvements; but when these were completed, the proprietor of the mansion found, with equal regret and surprise, that he no longer took the same pleasure in the society of his young friend. In point of fact, they had very few ideas in common; they had moved in

totally different spheres. Walter had seen little or nothing of that world in which the merchant had been such a busy actor; his studies and occupations had been confined to the *belles lettres*, of which Brown knew nothing, and to drawing and music, in which the old gentleman took no pleasure. The same remark was partially applicable to his brother, but Allan's temperament was more vivacious; his reading had been more discursive, particularly in books of travels; his mind was better able to accommodate itself to the taste, and even to the want of taste, of those with whom he associated. Gratitude for Brown's kindness to his mother prompted him to consult his humours,—his power of adaptation ensured success; his natural spirit and cheerfulness were additional charms in the eyes of an old man who wanted to be roused out of a growing lethargy and dulness, which he hated himself for feeling, though he could not shake them off, and it is therefore hardly necessary to add that Allan soon grew into a prodigious favourite, and was urged

to become a daily visitant at the Manor-House.

Among the peculiarities which now began to develop themselves in the character of Brown was a morbid apprehension that, being the richest man in the place, everybody was trying to cheat and overreach him. His own mercantile principle (or want of principle), that, in the way of business, all advantages were fair, rendered him suspicious of others, and, though quite willing to be liberal in his expenditure and to maintain an establishment suitable to his fortune, he became captious and wranglesome in adjusting the accounts of his tradespeople. As it invariably occurs in such cases, the cost of his instalment in the Manor-House considerably exceeded his expectations, and, as an equally common consequence, he lost his temper when he saw that he was likely to lose his money. Lawsuits were threatened, and his irritability would have so far conquered his good sense as to have subjected him to the additional plunder of legal proceedings, had not Allan fortunately betaken

himself to a respectable surveyor of Cheltenham, with whom they were distantly connected, and to whom most of the tradespeople were personally known. By the intervention of this person some of the charges were considerably reduced, others were proved to be just, the merchant's wrath was appeased, and the accounts were all amicably settled,—a result which tended to raise Allan into still higher estimation, not so much because it put an end to these fretting differences as because it seemed to indicate business-like habits and a certain degree of skill in negotiation.

Another suggestion of Allan, which tended still further to ingratiate him with Brown, because it enabled the latter to get pleasantly rid of some additional hours that might otherwise have hung heavily upon his hands, was the purchase of a billiard-table, which was fixed in the large old-fashioned hall. In the Casino, at Smyrna, he had occasionally practised this delightful game, and he was by no means sorry to have a new resource in his house, as well as an addi-

tional attraction for visitors, now that he began to feel the lonesomeness of his position. With his customary eagerness he betook himself to this pastime, generally in company with Allan and his brother, although he challenged every male visitant to a trial of skill. His constitutional impatience would never have allowed him to become a good player; yet he had been so long accustomed to succeed in all his undertakings, that he could not bear to be beaten, and took no pains to conceal his mortification when he lost the game, or his triumph when he won it.

Allan, whose somewhat careless and impetuous temperament disqualified him from making much progress, was generally a loser: but Walter's accurate eye, steady hand, and cautious mode of play soon gave him a decided mastery, although the game was quite new to him. Trifling as it was, this circumstance proved galling to Brown, who generally declined encountering him, and waited till he could make up a match with his brother; and partly from

this most frivolous ground of preference, corroborating his previous partiality, did the strong-minded or rather the strong-willed Adam Brown eventually determine to adopt Allan as his son and heir.

No sooner had he formed this important resolution than he hastened to impart it to Mrs. Latimer, for the excitement of divulging a secret gave an acceptable, though momentary, relief to the wearisome monotony of his mind. "My dear Madam," he began, as they were seated together in her little parlour, "you are aware that I consider myself under great obligations to my good friend Latimer—your late husband." The widow bowed and looked grave. "Nay, now, don't pull a long face; you know I hate dumps and doldrums, and, besides, you'll be for laughing, not crying, when you've heard what I'm going to say. Yes, it was he who first put me in the way of making my money, and therefore I think that my money ought to go back into his family. Don't you?"

"Dear Mr. Brown, it's very good of you

to say so, but you have done a great deal for us already: we are very grateful for all your past favours, and I'm sure none of us have the least wish to——”

“Nay, don't be alarmed; I'm not going to do anything more for you at present; but one can't live for ever, you know; and though they say that the asthma don't shorten a fellow's life, I know something else that does,—ay, and I not only know it, but feel it.”

“Dear me! what can that be?”

“Old age, Madam, old age—a complaint that gets worse every day, and which no doctor in the world can cure. Now, you are aware, and if not I tell you, that I have no relation in the wide world but a nephew who once cheated me out of seven hundred and fifty pounds hard money,—swindled me out of it, Madam, by a sham security—took me in—diddled me—an insult which I never can and never will forgive; in short, the fellow turned out a complete scamp. Perhaps he may be at this very moment at Botany Bay,—and if not, I am sure that he deserves to be.”

"But may he not live to reform, and perhaps to pay you back what he owes?" urged the kind-hearted lady.

"He can't un-cheat me, he can't un-diddle me, he can't un-swindle me, even if he would, which I don't believe. No, no; I have done with the fellow for ever. Hope I shall never see his face again—don't want to be disgraced: and so, to make a long story short, for I am beginning to wheeze, it is my present intention to leave my fortune, on certain conditions, to your son Allan."

"Gracious goodness! Mr. Brown, you don't mean it? How very, very good—how truly generous! How shall I ever—dear! dear! I cannot tell you how deeply——" Unable to conclude the sentence, she clasped her hands together, and turned her head aside to conceal her unbidden tears.

"Why, you're not going to whimper," cried her companion, "because I talk of leaving a fortune to your son? If you don't like it, I can bequeath it to an hospital."

"Forgive me, pray forgive me," sobbed

the widow ; “they were tears of joy, of gratitude.”

“ I don’t know that you have anything to be grateful about. Harkye, Madam ; I told you it was my *present* intention ; but I’m a queer old chap—I may change my mind,—very likely I shall ; I may live a hundred years—will if I can. All will depend on Allan’s conduct. If I continue to like him as well as I do now, he will be all the richer. If I don’t, he won’t ; and that he mayn’t have his head turned by fancying himself an heir, it is my will and pleasure that my intention—mind, my present intention—should remain a secret. Do you understand ? ”

“ Perfectly, perfectly ; but did you say that in your great generosity you meant to leave all to Allan ? I thought that if dear Walter were to have —— ”

“ Dear Walter will have none of my money. I mean to make an heir—to entail the Manor-House—to stipulate that its new owner shall take the name of Brown. If you don’t like the terms, you may declare off, and I’ll cry Nothing done.”

“Heaven forbid ! I have no right to dictate, or even to suggest ; only dear Walter is such a kind, affectionate, gentle, good creature.”

“Well, I shan’t make him less so by leaving money to his brother, shall I ?”

“Oh ! no, no ; nothing can do that. His generous and loving heart will even rejoice that Allan should have been preferred.”

“Then you needn’t say anything more about it ; and so, Madam, I wish you a good morning—Nay, nay, I won’t hear a word—I don’t want any thanks—I hate flummery, and that I have told you more than once ; let’s have none of it. Ha ! ha !”

Knowing the deep, the unalterable attachment of the twins, an affection which had hitherto rejected anything like the smallest separation of interests, Mrs. Latimer almost regretted that she had suggested a provision for her younger son, justly dear as he was to her. “It is all the same—it is all the same,” she murmured to herself. “Whatever Allan has will be Walter’s—whatever Walter has will be Allan’s. Never were two brothers so fond of each other :

never were two sons so fond of their mother. What a happy woman I am!" Her next resolution, as she walked rapidly along, was not to suffer herself to be unduly elated by this prospect of family enrichment; to eschew everything like pride or consequence; to preserve a becoming humility in the eyes of her neighbours, whatever they might suspect as to her future greatness. Her heart swelled at the moment with an irrepressible exultation, but, in the determination not to betray it by any outward gesture, she curtsied respectfully to the milkwoman and to the postman, whom she met upon the common, to the no small surprise of those functionaries, who had been heretofore saluted with a familiar nod, and a "Good day."

Mrs. Latimer was a conscientious woman; she would never knowingly betray a confidence—never divulge a secret confided to her; nor did she in this instance: it did not leak out of her mouth, but it escaped, it oozed forth, it evaporated, as it were, from every pore of her body, every expression of her face, every emanation of her mind.

Her countenance, usually so sedate, frequently lighted up, without any apparent cause, into simpering smiles ; she talked unconsciously to herself, imploring blessings upon her son's benefactor, and protesting that she should never be able to call Allan by the name of Brown ; and when any allusion was made to the merchant's will, and the probable bestowal of his property, she drew herself up with an air of profound mystery and reserve, and preserved an inflexible though smiling silence, that manifested both her knowledge of that document and her perfect satisfaction with its arrangements. Nor was Brown himself a very vigilant custodian of his own secret, often suffering hints and innuendoes to escape him, which were eagerly caught up and repeated by the by-standers. It was one of his habits, a remnant of his mercantile propensities, always to play billiards for a pecuniary consideration, however small. " A fellow can't feel any interest," he said, " when he's playing for nothing ; as bad as being supercargo of a ship in ballast ; and so, Master Allan, take care of your sixpences."

Such was the modest stake for which they usually contended, but it was sufficient to stimulate his exertions and to enhance his gratification when he pocketed his winnings. These, after a morning's play, would sometimes amount to two or three shillings, and he had been more than once heard to exclaim, as if to console his adversary for his loss, "Well, well, Allan, my boy! never mind; you'll have your revenge in the end: shouldn't wonder if you were to pocket lots of my money one of these days. No knowing. Mind you come early to-morrow."

By none were these significant inklings more eagerly snatched up and applied than by Captain Molloy, whose preconceived suspicions as to Brown's probable successor in the Manor-House estate they tended so strongly to confirm.

Determined, however, to make assurance doubly sure, he played off a little stratagem upon the simple-minded Mrs. Latimer, by running up to her one morning, seizing both her hands, which he shook most cordially, and exclaiming, in a voice of great apparent

sincerity, "By the powers! my dear Mrs. Latimer, I congratulate you most heartily; by my soul do I. So the secret's out at last—your son Allan is to be old Brown's heir."

"Dear me, Captain Molloy! who told you so? how could you ever have learnt it? I'm sure I never divulged it to a breathing soul."

"You know it to be true, then."

"Who—I? Yes—that is to say, no—" stammered the widow, hesitating at a direct falsehood, and fearing to make any confession. "It was you who said the secret was out—who told you? I never did—I wouldn't for all the world have it thought that I——"

"I can bear witness to that," laughed the Captain with a knowing look.—"Mum's the word—mute as a fish: I say nothing neither,—only one thing at least, and that I'm prepared to maintain, even with my life's blood, if necessary."

"Goodness me, Captain! what can that be?"

"Why, that a nod's as good as a wink

to a blind horse." With which words he walked rapidly away, muttering to himself, "No time to be lost—I must see Matilda,—set to work immediately."

CHAPTER IX.

ON a dark stormy evening towards the end of autumn, John Chubbs sat dozing and half drunk on the cross-bench of his homeward-bound market-cart, rocking from side to side with vibrations that soon would have destroyed his equilibrium, but for the regular jog-trot of his progress, and the instinctive care with which his old horse Wellington not only avoided collision with the few vehicles they met, but contrived to preserve the unbroken level of the road. It sounds like a desecration that the *clarum et venerabile nomen*—the name of which, beyond all others, our country and our age have the most reason to be proud,—should be bestowed upon a quadruped, however noble his qualities; but the sponsorial responsibility rests with John Chubbs, whose nomination we are compelled

to adopt, however we may quarrel with his taste.

By his singular fleetness and docility in his charger days, the animal had rendered special, perhaps vital, services to his present owner, who, not forgetting the soldier in the farmer, looked upon him rather as a friend and companion than a mere beast of burthen. John had started before daybreak for Cheltenham, with an assortment of farm produce, and his marketing, though not unsuccessful in the first instance, had been rendered nugatory, as usual, by his unfortunate propensity to tippling. Decoyed into a public-house, he had indulged his besetting sin till he became half intoxicated, when his knavish companions had engaged him in play and potations pottle deep, until they had cleared his pockets, after which they considerately helped him into his cart, well knowing that his discreet old charger would take him up to the farm gate in perfect safety. No interest, however, in his company, his cups, or his cards and dice, prevented our toper from reeling to the stable at the proper time to

feed his favourite, which he always did with his own hands, standing by his side as he devoured his provender, patting his neck, and hiccoughing the most affectionate and endearing terms as he caressed him ; in return for which friendly attentions Wellington, who really seemed to be sensible of the fact, whenever his driver was "the worse for liquor," piloted the cart in the skilful way we have been describing, and had never hitherto failed in drawing it home without accident.

On the evening in question, John Chubbs ought to have been more than usually sober, instead of tipsy, since he had been intrusted with a commission to execute for "the Squire," whom it was by no means his interest to offend, seeing that he was so much in arrear for rent. Mrs. Glossop had suggested to her master that he required an easy chair for what she termed his *boo-door*, meaning the little room in which he kept his account-books. "Ods bobs ! so I do—never thought of it afore," was the reply,—
"Well, then, order one to be sent over from

the upholsterer at Cheltenham ; but mind, I won't have any of those flimsy, rickety, tippie-topple things, like a bandbox with a back to it, such as they offered me at old Gory Gible's ; as well sit down upon a basket of eggs. I like to feel that I have something solid and trustworthy under me, something that I can take a comfortable nap in ; mind that—I don't care for fashions." In conformity with these instructions, Mrs. Glossop wrote to the upholsterer, and requested Chubbs to bring back the *fotool*, as she called it, in his market-cart, with the double motive of saving the cost of its conveyance (for she was a most thrifty manager), and of preparing an agreeable surprise for her master, who could hardly expect his orders to be so promptly executed.

It had accordingly been stowed at the back of the cart, whose driver went nodding along the road, too much fuddled to pay any attention, except by a waking start of a few moments, to the storm that came blustering up in fitful gusts from the far west behind him.

He had reached Blackhurst Level, where the road, closely skirted on either side by wild glades and clumps of firs, or compact masses of underwood, was already dark with the shades of evening, when a rush of wind, that nearly upset the arm-chair, roused him from his lethargy, and occasioned him to open his eyes with another start. From the obscurity surrounding him, he at first thought that the night had set in, and began to wonder what could have made him so late ; but as he cast his looks forwards, he beheld the mill on the summit of the opposite ascent still lighted up with a red and lurid glare from the last rays of the setting sun, which, contrasting with the dark clouds behind, threw it into bold relief, as its arms, like those of a living giant, whirled rapidly round, in apparent defiance of the battling elements. Looking next towards the rear to account for the unusual gloom, and perceiving that a heavy storm was gathering, Chubbs buttoned up his coat, and by a peculiar whistle, perfectly understood by his horse, urged him to mend his speed. The distant

thunder and the wind-gusts, at first muttering and low, but gathering in loudness and violence as they approached, sounded like the artillery and the trumpet-blasts of an advancing and victorious host, before which a fanciful observer might have imagined that everything was rushing away in terror. The fir cones and the vari-coloured leaves of autumn that had lain in little heaps by the roadside like patches of mosaic, and were now whirled rapidly along, might have been deemed the intermingled soldiers of a defeated army flying confusedly from the battle-field. Some of the lighter leaves were seen whisking upon the air, as if, like the flying-fish, they sought in a new element a momentary respite from their pursuers; but they soon fell, again to be confounded with the mass of fugitives. Even the trees by the roadside appeared to stretch away their arms from the sweeping blast, as if they implored assistance, since their roots prevented their seeking safety by joining the general flight. The clouds above, and the clouds of dust below, sped furiously along; a flash of

lightning threw a spectral glare over the dim glades, upon which the pall of a deeper darkness immediately descended; a sharp clap of thunder announced the progress of the tempest, and the old charger, pointing his ears and neighing, broke into a quicker trot, as if he were again preparing himself for a charge. In the momentary lull succeeding the last thunder-clap, Chubbs heard a loud voice, at no great distance behind him, calling out—"Hallo! stop; hilloa! stop, stop!" a summons which he did not at first feel the smallest inclination to obey, for two or three recent robberies in that lonesome part of the road had entailed a bad character upon it. The old soldier, however, liked not the notion of running away, a practice to which he had never been accustomed—he had little or nothing to lose—it was not likely that highwaymen would be abroad at so early an hour—it might be some wearied wayfarer in want of a cast—in consideration of all which probabilities, for his muddled brain had been somewhat cleared by his long nap, he hastily buttoned his Waterloo medal

(his most valued property) inside his waistcoat, seized a stout stick to be prepared for every emergency, and stopped his cart.

As it chanced that this halt had occurred where an opening of the glades on either side allowed the twilight to penetrate, Chubbs might well stare aghast, and distrust the evidence of his senses, as he contemplated the apparition, for such might it be almost deemed, that now came running up. He beheld an old man habited in the black robes of a monk, his waist cinctured by a cord, from which depended a rosary and crucifix; his head was bald except at the back, whence tufts of grizzled hair came round, uniting with a venerable beard of the same hue; while the deep furrows of his face and forehead bespoke a weight of years little in accordence with the vigour and activity of his motions. Nor was his language in better accordence with his garb, his first words, as soon as he recovered his breath, being an angry exclamation of—"Curse you, clodpole! why didn't you stop sooner? I have been bawling and scampering after you

till I'm half dead. Why didn't you pull up?"

"Because I didn't choose," replied the sturdy farmer, grasping his stick, and still preserving his bewildered stare; "who the deuce is to halt at your word of command? Who are you—what are you—what do you want?"

"I want a short cast, for which you shall be well paid," replied the figure, in a softer voice; "and there's your money in advance, to show that I don't want to bilk you." With these words he thrust a crown-piece into John's hand, and without waiting a reply, vaulted nimbly into the cart, and seated himself in the arm-chair, exclaiming, "Now then, farmer, quick! quick! on with you; and if you'll put old Dobbin into a gallop, you shall have another crown-piece."

"I don't gallop him for nobody," replied John, giving a chirp that instantly started his horse, "but his quick trot's quite as good, and that you'll say if you could only see his action. But what in the name of wonder be you, in this here outlandish garb?"

“ Me? why, don't you see? I am a free and accepted mason, going to a meeting of my lodge. We always meet at night—that is, whenever it proves stormy.”

“ Well, that's a rum go, any how. And where do you meet?”

“ At the place you are going to; I forget the name of it.”

“ Gammon! you won't bamboozle me with such a cock-and-a-bull story as that. You're no more a freemason than I am.”

“ You're right for once in your life, perfectly right, Master Clodpole. I am surveying this country for a railway line, and here you see are my implements of trade, my line and rule, my compass, my quadrant, and my theodolite. In short, old Chaw-bacon, I am a civil engineer.”

“ You arn't a civil nothink, or you wouldn't call nobody names, and if you do so again I may chance to pitch you right out of the cart. I tell you I'm not to be humbugged. I see no engineer's tools about you, not I; nothink but a cross and a string of beads.”

“ True, true, you have found me out; I have no doubt you can see as far into a millstone as a blind horse. Harkee, my fine old fellow ! can you keep a secret ? ”

“ Ay, when I’m sober, as I am now. ”

“ Then lend me your ear, and never divulge what I am about to tell you. I am a missionary sent over by the Pope to convert the English to popery. ”

“ Well, that do look more likely like, for when I were soldiering in Spain, among the Papishes, I see lots of monks and friars, and such black cattle, just the same as you be. But harkye, domine, for that’s what we used to call ’em abroad, don’t go for to think that you’ve listed me into your regiment by the crown you tipped me just now; I’m not to be caught that way. ”

“ No, no; you’re welcome to it without any crimping or recruiting, and to half as much more when you mend you pace.—Gee ho, Dobbin ! I suppose your sick wife is waiting for this comfortable arm-chair, so you had better make haste home. ”

“ It baint for my wife, but for the Squire. ”

“ The Squire ! what Squire ? ”

“ Master Adam Brown of the Manor-House.”

“ Adam Brown ! ” exclaimed the stranger with a start of surprise : “ what Adam Brown ? Where does he come from ? How old is he ? Who is he ? What is he ? Speak ! speak ! ”

“ Why, he do come last from some outlandish place beyond seas, but I don’t mind the name on’t just now.”

“ Smyrna ! was it Smyrna ? ”

“ Ay, you’ve hit the nail on the head ; that’s it, and no mistake.”

“ And Adam Brown is an old quiz of sixty or more, that wears a pigtail wig, and cinnamon-coloured clothes, and carries a gold-headed cane ? ”

“ That’s he ; you’ve just nicked him.”

“ And where is he now living ? ”

“ Why, at the Manor-House at Woodcote.”

“ The same ! the same ! I have heard him say that he was born at Woodcote.— So, so, so ! Adam Brown is at Woodcote, is

he? Who would have thought it? This is fortunate, indeed !”

By this time they had reached the foot of the hill, when the horse, as had invariably been his custom, slackened his pace into a walk, and at the same moment voices were heard shouting in the rear. “They are coming,—the villains are upon me,—I shall be nabbed at last !” suddenly exclaimed the stranger with an oath. “We must gallop up the hill, or I am regularly done for.” So saying he snatched the whip, and was about to let fall a heavy blow upon the horse, when Chubbs, arresting his arm, cried out, “Paws off, master; ’ware whip ! If you offer to touch Wellington, I’ll pitch ye head over heels into the road. He’s an old soldier and won’t stand it,—no more won’t I.”

“Why, I thought soldiers were accustomed to be flogged !”

“Ay, them as are Christians and rational creeturs, but not the poor brute beasts ; so down with the whip or bundle out, for I shall walk him all the way up the hill.”

Loud and eager voices, and the footsteps of people running rapidly along the road, were again borne upon the wind, at sound of which the stranger, uttering a volley of execrations, leaped from the cart, and rushing along an opening by the wayside, bristled with stumps of newly-felled trees, made for the thicket by which it was bounded. Favoured by the gloom, he might perhaps have escaped the notice of his pursuers, but that, at this moment, a charcoal-burner opened the door of his solitary log-hut : a fire was blazing within it ; the light fell upon the fugitive ; the men who held him in chase set up a new halloo, as they ran at full speed in pursuit, and the whole party soon disappeared amid the trees, though Chubbs heard their shouts at intervals, as he proceeded up the hill, until the sounds were lost in the distance, or drowned in the greater noise of the increasing tempest.

The clamour of the storm, the occupation of protecting himself and the arm-chair against the rain, but above all, the startling and mysterious adventure he had just wit-

nessed, had effectually sobered our farmer, who sat revolving the occurrence in his mind in a deeper and more puzzling perplexity the more he endeavoured to solve the enigma. But for the little struggle when he had wrenched the whip from his hand, and had fully ascertained that his companion was *boná fide* flesh and blood, he might have suspected him, notwithstanding his sable hue, to be a ghost playing truant before the proper midnight hour, and hurrying back to the burial-place whence he had eloped.

In the absence of any more plausible solution, he was obliged to credit the stranger's last assertion, backed as it was by his dress, and set him down for a real monk and missionary; but why so reverend a character should swear like a trooper, be chased along the highroad as if he were a runaway gaol-bird, and confess that he would be "regularly done for" if overtaken, he could not even surmise. Wellington, who thought he knew the way home better than his master, and who nine times out of ten would have been

right in that impression, could hardly be prevailed upon to leave the turning that led to the farm, though he did so at last, and arrived in due time at the Manor-House.

“*Mon doo !*” exclaimed Mrs. Glossop, who had been anxiously expecting the arm-chair; “where have you been a-dawdling all this blessed day, John Chubbs? I was quite in tribilation, *au desespaw*, as the French say. I see you’ve brought the *fotool*, however; but what a *mauvais tong* night!—I fear it will be wet to the skin.”

“If the chair baint, I be,” said the farmer, taking off part of his wraps, and scattering the water from his hat as he swung it to the ground.

“*O ciel !*” exclaimed the housekeeper, into whose right eye a dirty drop had been accidentally whirled. “Was there ever such a *bel sauvage*! Do mind what you are about. You have given me quite a *mal au dong* in the eye. Here, John Trotman, help him out with the chair; we must have it to the kitchen fire to be dried. Come, *depeshay voo*, you move like a pig of lead.”

“Better move than look like pig,” blurted John, slowly measuring the housekeeper’s portly figure, as if his eyes found some difficulty in getting round it.

“Marry, come up!” was the quick reply: “any but such a *bate sauvage* as you would know that *embonepoint* is a great beauty; so none of your nonsense, if you please. *Allons*, Mister Saucebox! I can’t keep waiting for you.”

“Another thing you can’t keep.”

“What’s that?”

“Your temper.”

“It’s false, you great *cul de sac*; you good-for-nothing *bone-bouche* of a fellow! On the contrary, I was always remarkable for the sweetness and acerbity of my disposition. Now then, Chubbs,” continued the fussy housekeeper, “push the chair forward, for it’s heavy, I see. John Trotman! you take hold of the front leg, and let it down gently for fear of breaking the casters. What had I better hold, myself?”

“Your tongue,” said John, drily, at the same time depositing the chair safely on the hall floor.

“*Ma foi!*” exclaimed Mrs. Glossop, who had fortunately not heard the last jibe, or it would probably have provoked an angry rejoinder; “it’s the very thing,—quite a *bijoo* of a *fotool*, I do declare. But master mustn’t *sassoir* himself down in it till it has been thoroughly aired.”

“And who do you think were the last chap that sot down in it?” asked Chubbs—an inquiry that entailed a full, true, and particular account of his strange adventure on the road, to which even Trotman could not listen without a stolid look of wonder, and which was received by Mrs. Glossop with repeated starts and exclamations of mingled amazement and dismay. No sooner was the story concluded than she left the arm-chair to its fate, and hastened to the parlour to communicate the mysterious tidings. To her infinite disappointment, her master was so far from participating in her terror and perplexity, that he expressed with a contemptuous sneer his total disbelief of the occurrence.

“Tush! woman; simpleton, to listen to

these fooleries. The fellow was drunk or asleep, most likely both, dreaming ; perhaps saw a Will-o'-the-wisp—like enough ; several marshy bits, you know, at Blackhurst Bottom. Monks and missionaries indeed ! Stuff and nonsense ! don't tell me. I've given Master Chubbs credit for nearly two years' rent, but can't give him credit for this idle nonsense, and so you may tell him from me. I want more money and fewer lies. There I had him. Ha ! ha !”

On her way back to the hall the disconcerted housekeeper met Trotman, who passed her with a rather more significant look than usual, but without uttering a word, and proceeded to the parlour, upon the table of which he deposited a handsome gold watch set round with brilliants.

“What's the meaning of this ?” demanded Brown in a tone of surprise.

“Chubbs found it in turnips.”

“What turnips ?”

“Two bundles at bottom of cart, unsold.”

“When did he find it ?”

“Just now.”

"But whose is it? Whence does it come?"

"Dropped by Monk—suppose."

"All he knows about it, then, is, that it was not among the unsold turnips when he left Cheltenham; and that, consequently, it must have been dropped, either purposely or accidentally, by the fellow whom he calls the monk." John nodded assent eagerly, as if glad to be spared any further cross-questioning.

"Adzooks!" pursued the merchant, "there's no Will-o'-the-wisp in this—no dream, at all events; capital gold watch, gold chain and seals,—arms engraved at the back. Why, then, the fellow must have had somebody in his cart after all. Do you think the stranger dropped it?"

"Who else? Don't rain gold watches."

"No more it does, no more it does: a very just and sensible remark, John. But what does Chubbs wish me to do with it? I should like to speak with him."

"Driving off," said the servant, pointing with his thumb in the direction of the sound made by the wheels of the cart.

"Hilloa, you sir ! Hilloa, John Chubbs !" cried the merchant, throwing open a window that looked upon the front garden ; " what am I to do with this gold watch ? "

" Keep it, Squire, if you please, till you can find out the Monk. I won't have a-nothink to do with it ; sure as a gun it'll bring trouble with it ; it may be a gunpowder-plot affair : so I'll leave it in your hands. "

" Vastly considerate, truly : well, come up in the morning ; I want to have a long talk with you about this strange story. But, I say, John Chubbs, were you drunk or asleep when your queer friend jumped into the cart ? "

" Why, Squire, I do reckon I wasn't quite neither one nor t'other, but betwixt and betweenish, as a man may say. "

" Ah ! I thought so : however, come and tell me all about it to-morrow morning. But, I say, John Chubbs, how was the fellow, old or young ? "

" A bald-headed old chap to look at, Squire, but a young 'un to run away. "

" And what sort of a face ? "

" Why, I warn't a-minded much to mark

his face like, 'cause it were dark ; but when he were a looking up at the sky, and there came a flash o' lightning, I thuft I see a scar across the left side of his cheek, across the jowl like, but it might ha' been a smear o' dirt ; so I won't swear to a-nothing."

" Well, well, I can't stand chattering any longer at this cold window. Come to me in the morning. Good night !"

Chubbs drove home, and would have received, as he richly deserved, a severe scolding from his wife for the shameful waste of his market money, had she not been so apprehensive of his rheumatism, and so busy in changing his wet garments for others which she had hung to the fire long before his return, and then so much bustled in preparing his supper and listening to his strange adventure, that his tippling misdemeanors and his loss of a whole day quite slipped out of her head. Brown, in the meanwhile, had minutely examined the gold watch, and looked at the maker's name, and counted the number of diamonds and estimated the value of the whole, and was

deeply interested in endeavouring to trace its owner by comparing the arms with those in a book of heraldry, when the clock struck ten, from which established hour of retiring to rest he never suffered any occupation to divert him. As a general rule, the same methodical arrangement extended to the household; but adventures were too rare at the Manor-House to allow a hurried discussion of the recent singular occurrence, which was canvassed by the servants with closed doors, when an infinity of conjectures were broached in vain endeavours to solve the enigma, until the clock had sounded midnight, upon which significant hint they withdrew to their beds in no small bewilderment of spirit.

Short as it had been, the colloquy with Chubbs entailed very unpleasant consequences upon Brown, the chilly night-air having brought on a sharp attack of toothache which prevented his sleeping. Tired of tossing about in his bed, and of reproaching himself for having been such a fool, at his time of life, as to stand chattering at an

open window, he at length got up, dressed himself, and, in the mere restlessness of pain and feverish impatience, resolved to walk round the garden. The sun had not yet risen, but the glimmering flush stealing up the eastern sky had already quenched the stars in that direction, although others in the opposite quarter were still brightly twinkling, as if they bravely resolved to arrest the retreat of night, and to struggle to the very last moment with the advancing god of day. From the effect of the recent storm, the air was unusually pellucid, while the lateness of the season rendered it crisp and bracing. So calm was the dawn, that the leaves, heavily as they were laden with dew, scarcely let fall a drop, unless where the quick walk of the pedestrian, whose progress partook of his mental petulance, occasioned a passing vibration in the air. The last vagrant bat had flitted to the thick ivy of the ruined pigeon-house; the tenants of the rookery had not yet quitted their nests; not a sound was heard, except the occasional faint chirp of a hedge-bird

twittering in its dreams ; and the clarion of an early cock, who seemed to be crowing with more than ordinary triumph, as if exulting that he had the world of sound all to himself. His exclusive possession, however, was not of long continuance, for a solitary lark, who had mounted to a height that gave him a glimpse of the uprising sun, though it was still invisible below, proclaimed the tidings with as much rapturous eagerness as the mast-head sailor-boy shouts his glad discovery when he first sees land.

Brown, who had no taste in his present mood, nor, indeed, at any time, for the observation of natural beauties, hurried on to the postern at the back of the garden, and, mounting upon a stone, gazed vacantly over it. Not an object moved in the fields outspread before him ;—a few of the daisies were indeed beginning to wink, as if peeping out for the first intimation of the sun, but the crimson eyelashes of the majority were still closed in slumber ; not a single tiny pearl of dew had fallen from the cobweb threads

with which the fern and the tall blades of grass were festooned ; the wild flowers under the hedge were still dim and indistinct, and among them a solitary poppy with its drooping head looked like a military sentinel slumbering on his post ; the sleeping cows, imbedded in the glittering sward, might have been taken for figures of cattle painted on a silver ground ; the motionless and shadowless trees, with their glistening foliage, wore an artificial look ; and had it not been for the mysterious tinkling of a little unseen rill, which had been all night long humming its gentle lullaby to the nodding hedge-flowers, the whole landscape might have been thought dead or unreal.

“Sha’n’t find a cure for the tooth-ache by staring at daisies and dandelions,” soliloquised Brown in a moody tone ; “catch nothing but a cold by getting up so early,—ugh ! If I send for old purblind Dawson, ten to one but he tugs out the wrong tooth. In Smyrna, now, there was an Armenian dentist lived in the next street,—clever chap that,—would whip out every

tooth in your head afore you could say Jack Robinson."

In this unenviable frame of mind and body he pursued his walk, skirting the enclosure of the garden and drive, and had just emerged from a clump of trees, when, on raising his eyes from the ground, he beheld, looking fixedly through the great iron gate of entrance, a figure exactly resembling the monk as described by Chubbs. There was the bald head, the deeply furrowed face, the grizzled beard, the long black robe, the pendent rosary and crucifix—everything that had been so minutely portrayed. Though neither a timid nor a superstitious man, the merchant was so far daunted by this unexpected vision, that he stood still for a minute, during which the stranger scrutinized him with marked attention, and then hurried out of sight, though his footsteps were still heard as if he was running along the outside of the wall. Re-assured as quickly as he had been disconcerted, Brown, determined, if possible, to penetrate the mystery, called out to him to stop, at

the same time hastening forward with the intention of pursuing him ; but the gate was locked, the key was in the house, and there was no time to seek it ; so he ran to the ruined pigeon-house, climbed half-way up, and looking over the wall discovered the object of his search cowering down, as if to conceal himself, behind one of the heavy stone buttresses. “ Holloa, you sir ! ” he shouted aloud ; “ who are you ?—what are you ?—what do you want here ? Have you lost a gold watch ? ”

Instead of replying to these questions, the monk started in apparent alarm from his retreat, and rushing at full speed across the fields, plunged into the shaws and thickets with which the country was tangled, in that direction, to a considerable distance. “ Ah ! no chance of nabbing the fellow now,” growled Brown ; “ if I were to scamper after him, I should only get lost, like the babes in the wood, in yonder confounded maze of bushes, and briars, and trees, and criss-cross lanes. No shops there to inquire at ; no names written up at the

corners of the footpaths, no passengers to tell you the way. No use speaking to hips and haws, sloes and blackberries: don't know the way themselves, and if they did wouldn't tell you. Hope some naughty little boy with ragged teeth and a bad breath will eat 'em all up for their pains. Ugh! there goes the tooth again.—Curse it! what right has it to shoot? Hasn't taken out a licence!"

CHAPTER X.

HERE was a tale of mystery, upon which the gossips of Woodcote and its vicinity banqueted for a long time, exercising their ingenuity in devising its solution, but with no better success than had attended the similar conjectures of the servants at the Manor-House. Roger Crab, who had rather a narrow swallow for marvellous tales, conceiving it much more likely that men should lie or be deceived, than that prodigies should occur, suspected that Chubbs had been dreaming in the first instance, and that the relation of the supposed monk and his freaks had conjured up a similar sleeping or waking phantom in the mind of Brown : a theory, however, which found few or no supporters ; for there is a fondness for the wonderful, and a pleasure in guessing at a puzzle, of which

neither men nor women like to be deprived. The gold watch, it was urged, and there was great validity in the plea, was neither a nightmare nor a spectral illusion, but "a palpable hit, egad !" a most unequivocal and valuable timepiece, which seemed to have done duty in some family of respectability. Advertisements were inserted in the Cheltenham papers ; but, as no claimant appeared, it remained locked up in Brown's desk ; furnishing abundant materials for surmise, but no clue for the discovery of its owner.

At a dinner-party at the Manor-House, consisting of the usual guests, for the neighbourhood supplied but little variety, this inexhaustible subject had engrossed the tongues and the attention of the company for some time, when Roger Crab, by way of turning the conversation, expressed his regret that Fanny Chubbs should look so ill and appear so unhappy.

"Poor girl !" exclaimed Mrs. Latimer, in a tone of deep feeling, "I pity her most sincerely ; she seems to be quite pining away, and they do say it is all for love of Harry

Groombridge.—I think his father is quite inexcusable in withholding his consent to their marriage.”

“And I think just the contrary,” cried Brown: “the old miller is right, and acts like a sensible fellow and a good father. If Harry takes the daughter, he will probably have the whole family to maintain, for old Chubbs, thanks to his drunkenness, is going to the dogs as fast as he can. The miller has enough to do with his own children: if I were in his place, I should act just as he has done.”

“Ellen, my dear!” exclaimed Mrs. Latimer, addressing Molloy’s second daughter, “how pale you turn!—and now you are quite red again: don’t you feel well?”

“Not quite,” faltered Ellen; “I fear the fire has been rather too much for me.”

“Let me entreat you, then, to move instantly,” cried Walter, jumping up with an air of deep concern, and running round to offer his arm: “change places with me. How could I be so negligent as not to think of it sooner?”

"I can't imagine what's come to the girl lately," whispered the Captain: "she used to be able to stand fire or anything else. I remember when we were once dining with the Marquis——"

"I am quite well now," interposed Ellen, "and am very sorry that I have given so much trouble.—Pray let the conversation proceed."

"Don't you think, then," resumed Mrs. Latimer, addressing Brown, "that Harry, seeing how the poor girl takes on, may be tempted to marry without his father's consent?"

"If he does, Madam, he will be a very good-for-nothing chap. A fellow without a fair prospect of maintaining them, has no more right to set up a wife and eight children, than he has to drive a coach and eight horses."

"An equipage such as you describe," urged Mrs. Latimer, "would be preposterous in a poor man, not to say a wicked piece of extravagance; but a marriage where two people are mutually attached, is so natural."

“So are hunger, and thirst, and starvation,—exceedingly natural. But we are not living in a state of nature, Madam. If we were, we might marry as fast as we liked : no need of houses, clothes, or kitchen : live in a cave ; wear a coat of paint or train-oil, instead of broad-cloth ; eat carrion ; drink ditch-water ;—that’s a natural marriage, Madam.”

“My dear Mrs. Latimer,” said Crab, “it is no use arguing with our friend upon this subject ; he is quite a Malthusian, you see.”

“No such thing,—never read Malthus in my life,—not an anythingian, nor don’t wish to be, except a common-sensian, and there I shall have the field all to myself, or nearly so. Ha, ha ! a home-thrust that for the whole world. Hope it likes it.”

“But upon your system of celibacy for the poor,” remonstrated Mrs. Latimer, “is there not a great chance of a wide-spread immorality ?”

“No, not half so much as there is from poor marriages, for these entail want, and distress, and temptation ; and where people

have no property of their own, there's no security for the property of their neighbours. Never hear of rich pickpockets,—never stopped on the high road by an alderman; never burked by a banker.”

“And yet it does seem rather hard upon the poor,” persisted Mrs. Latimer, “that, in addition to their other privations, they are to be debarred from the pleasure of marriage.”

“The pleasure, Madam! the fiddlestick! Rather say the wretchedness. What think you of ten children in a two-roomed cabin, five with the small-pox, five with the measles, all with the hooping-cough; what say to that, Madam, hey?”

“I say that you have no right to suppose such an extreme case. The young folks may be all in rude health.”

“Ay, ay, rude enough for that matter. Two of them beating little drums, two blowing penny trumpets, two driving hoops round the room, two making the dog bark, and the other two crying at the top of their voices because they have no drums, trum-

pets, hoops, or dog, to make a noise with. Pleasant for a sick mother, and a father with a racking headache !”

“ Now you have wandered to the opposite extreme,” smiled Mrs. Latimer: “ the children could not well be all young at once. Four of them, at least, would be grown up.”

“ Very true, Madam, very true: your two elder sons, after having nearly tormented you to death, and saddled you repeatedly with their debts, will have found their way to the Fleet and King’s Bench; your two eldest girls will have run away with two scamps, whose families you will have to maintain; and the six younger children will be all waiting to imitate the hopeful example of their seniors. However, all these enjoyments are lost to me: I am a poor devil of an old bachelor: I never married.”

“ How very clever he is! so sensible—so argumentative, and so droll too!” said Matilda to Crab, in a whisper that was meant to be overheard. “ It’s quite instructive, as well as entertaining, to listen to him, isn’t it ?”

“ And as to the hardship of a single life,”

resumed Brown, "the poor are only called upon to practise the same restraint and discretion that are exercised by their superiors. Zooks, Madam! *I* never thought of hampering myself with a wife when I was a poor clerk, or running about the world as a supercargo:—not such an ass. Wiser still—haven't thought of it since."

"Heaven grant you may never feel the want of a wife, my dear sir!" ejaculated Mrs. Latimer.

"Amen!" responded the merchant. "Laughed fit to split, some time ago, at a comedy—forget the name—a bachelor was one of the characters—an old maid attacks him—parcel of useless fellows, says she—for my part I wonder government doesn't put a tax upon bachelorship.—Really so do I, cries the cunning old fox, rubbing his hands,—for it's quite a luxury.—There he had her—gave her a Rowland for her Oliver—Don't you think so?—Ha! ha!"

"But you would not object to a marriage where there's money on one side?" said Matilda.

"Certainly not; the parties then are no longer a poor couple."

"Very true, very true," was the reply; and then, turning to Crab, she continued in the same audible whisper as before, "What shrewdness, what sagacity in everything he says! Don't you find him a very superior man?"

"I do," was replied *sotto voce*; "so much so, that I would not, if I were you, throw away any flattery upon him. You may whisper lower, too, and still be heard, for his ears are sharp."

"La! Mr. Crab, how can you be so rude? I never flattered you, at all events."

"Alas! I have no young heir."

"By the powers!" cried Molloy, coming to the support of his daughter, "Tilda is perfectly right; money on one side is quite sufficient, and if the other happens to be of an ancient, honourable, and distinguished family, sure they meet upon equal terms. By the bye, neighbour Brown, did I ever explain to you the different quarterings and bearings upon our coat

of arms ? We claim a very great descent, you know."

"There can be no doubt of it, none in the world," gravely replied Crab. "When I was at Brussels, I remember to have seen an old painting of Noah entering the Ark with a box under his arm, on which was inscribed 'Papers of the Molloy family.' These were doubtless your ancestors."

"Capital! capital!" laughed Molloy; "I didn't know you were a wag. What has given you such a turn for fiction?"

"Sympathy! sympathy! Have you never noticed it before, when I have been chatting with you?"

As our penetrating readers, a class which includes every individual of the fair sex, will doubtless have suspected that there was good cause for the depressed spirits and occasional deep emotion of Ellen Molloy, we feel that we ought not any longer to delay an explanation as to the state of her affections, as well as those of the twin brothers. Excluded as were the two families from other associates of their own age;

residing within sight of each other's dwellings; and mutually attracted by a congeniality in tastes, pursuits, and amusements, it was hardly to be expected that their intercourse could be continued, and it had now endured for some time, without an ultimate engagement of their affections. This tendency on the part of Ellen and the twins had been so gradual, as to be at first imperceptible even to themselves. They had played together in their younger days, and, when they attained maturity, their pastimes were succeeded by pursuits and recreations which rather tended to cement than loosen the pleasant bonds of their previous intimacy. It has been already stated that the brothers were passionately devoted to music, in which they were both well skilled, although their talent in this, as in several other respects, assumed a distinctive character. As Molloy could not afford to pay for masters, he encouraged his young neighbours to cross the common and give instructions, as often as it suited them, to his daughters; and the latter would

often be invited by Mrs. Latimer to her cottage, that they might practise upon her piano, and sing with her sons, or take a lesson in drawing. Sometimes they made little excursions together in the neighbourhood for the purpose of sketching or of visiting any of the views or remarkable objects which were within walking distance, or could be reached with the assistance of the fly, now rendered more extensively available by the vigour and activity of the new horse.

From the very commencement of their acquaintance a congeniality of disposition, a kindred affectionateness in their susceptible hearts, had made close and almost inseparable companions of Ellen and Walter; an association which, unconsciously to both parties, had ripened into a deep attachment. As there are certain plants which push forth their shoots more vigorously under pressure and exclusion from the light, so had this mutual love appeared to develop itself the more actively from being kept suppressed and undivulged. When Ellen, however,

now no longer a girl, discovered the real state of her affections, it filled her with a sorrow and despondency only the more painful because she knew, by that mysterious freemasonry which invariably reveals lovers' secrets to each other, that her predilection was fully reciprocated.

At first, indeed, her heart had swelled with exultation when the thrilling tones and impassioned eyes of Walter disclosed what his lips had never attempted to reveal; but this was a momentary triumph, only giving an additional poignancy to her despondent feelings, when she reflected how completely all chances of their union were destroyed by their respective circumstances. Generous and high-minded as she was fond and gentle, Ellen consulted the interests of the man to whom she was attached, much more than her own wishes. She foresaw that an improvident marriage, while it must seriously compromise his prospects in life, would expose herself to an incessant struggle with poverty, and probably terminate in blighting the happiness of both. Narrow as were

Walter's present means of subsistence, they would be considerably reduced by the death of his mother, in an annuity upon whose life the twins had sunk the greater portion of their little fortunes; and as to herself, she was not only penniless, but likely to involve her husband, were she so indiscreet as to unite herself with a poor man, in all sorts of pecuniary difficulties.

Too well did she know her father's embarrassments, and his unscrupulous character, not to feel assured that he would entangle, and perhaps ultimately ruin, any one upon whom he could practise his arts and trickeries. His plausible manners, apparently so frank and undesigning, had already decoyed comparative strangers into his snares; how then were his machinations to be resisted by one so yielding and so unsuspecting as Walter? No one could marry her without being plunged into debts and troubles—without becoming liable, in fact, for the support of the whole family (if he suffered himself to be thus victimised), or quarrelling with her father, if he refused. Although

a long exposure to the attacks of duns, and the mortifications of poverty, had steeled the Captain against their assaults, Ellen was not so callous; the constant humiliations and occasional insults to which they were subjected wounded her honest pride, while they weighed heavily upon her heart; and she would have deemed it a most ungenerous, not to say unprincipled act, to implicate the man she loved in similar degradations and anxieties. Such were the considerations that determined her, as soon as she had discovered the real state of her affections, to control and conquer her unfortunate passion, at whatever sacrifice; such were the causes of the deep depression of spirits, the long fits of silence, and the pallid looks of languor to which, in our previous pages, we have made slight and unexplained allusion.

Under the influence of the circumstances we have already detailed, it is almost superfluous to state that Walter's youthful predilection for Ellen had been gradually fostered into an attachment as ardent as her

own, although the prospective impediments to their union, which were as glaringly manifest to his eyes as to hers, had placed a seal of secrecy and silence upon his lips. While their intimacy remained undiminished he was too happy, indeed, to yearn for any change in their relative positions ; it afforded him an enjoyment, a delight which he would almost have feared to risk by a declaration, even had there been a prospect of a happy issue to his suit. His was the arm that she invariably took in all their excursions ; to him was it that she always applied for lessons in music or drawing ; he was the tuner of her guitar ; with him it was that she sang duets, or compared notes as to the new books they had been reading ; and to him it was that she ran for assistance when any little mechanical job was to be executed at the cottage, for which she sometimes contrived to make pretexts with all the ingenuity of love. A garden seat was broken by an intentional accident, or an espalier dissevered, or the trellis-work damaged, that his amateur carpentry might be put in

requisition ; and when he was thus occupied, her father, glad to avail himself of gratuitous services, generally set him other tasks, of which he was never weary, since they afforded him opportunities of prolonged communication with Ellen.

When the latter, however, had determined to struggle with an attachment which she felt to be hopeless, though she knew it to be reciprocated, a sudden, and, to Walter, an inexplicable and most painful alteration occurred in her deportment. Shunning him as studiously as she had previously courted his society ; assuming, when they were forced to meet, a coldness and reserve equally foreign and distressing to her heart ; converting her lately beaming smiles into an expression of indifference, and compelling her lips to assume the tone and language of formal civility, she sought to stifle his unlucky passion, and check her own, by transferring to Allan, in the most pointed manner, all those little attentions and fascinating marks of preference which she had hitherto lavished upon his brother. Walter's

own heart, and a close observation of Ellen's manners, which bore evident marks of a painful constraint, having revealed to him the real motive of this apparent estrangement, he never reproached her, however deeply he might regret it; never felt a moment's jealousy of Allan, to whom indeed he was hardly less fondly attached than to Ellen.

Allan, however, who looked upon this alteration as a voluntary and marked expression of her regards to himself—a preference the more flattering because it had been perfectly unsolicited on his part—thought that he might fairly welcome his good fortune, and conciliate the favour which he found her so willing to bestow. His temperament was naturally susceptible, his feelings impetuous, and the poor youth was deeply involved in a love which he fondly imagined to be reciprocal, very shortly after Ellen had adopted that new line of conduct which he had misconstrued into a direct encouragement.

In this explanation we have made no al-

lusion to Matilda, the eldest sister, because she was not implicated in the game of cross-purposes with which Cupid, indulging in the well-known malice of his disposition, was amusing himself at Woodcote. Several years the senior of her sister, in whose education she had assisted, she still looked upon her as a child—still retained that air of superiority which teachers of either sex find it so difficult to resign, even when conversing with those who have not been their pupils. The twins, too, were her juniors, and too poor, moreover, to be deemed worthy her attention, for she thought highly of her charms, though they were no longer in their first bloom, and had experienced such daily and bitter proofs of the annoyances arising from narrow circumstances, that she had not the least wish to extend their sufferings into her married life. In fact she had set her heart upon a Nabob residing at Cheltenham, and looked forward with delight to her father's occasional visits to that place, as affording the most probable chance for the realisation of her ambitious hopes.

Such had been the state of affairs when Brown took possession of the Manor-House, —an occurrence which quickly operated a marked change in the views and hopes both of the Latimers and the Molloyes. The merchant, who was known to be wealthy and childless, had no sooner proclaimed his friendship for the former family by the handsome donations he had made, than visions of his future favour, and its probable consequences, sprang up on all sides, even the despondent Ellen deeming it not improbable that, as he had once offered to procure a situation for Walter, he might be induced to provide for him in some way, or to make him such an allowance as would authorise him to marry. Hence her deep emotion when she had heard the old gentleman make a declaration in favour of primogeniture, which threatened to exclude Walter from his future bounty, and her similar distress at the bitterness with which he inveighed against all marriages where the parties had not a fair and reasonable prospect of maintaining a family.

But the most signal change effected by

Brown's anticipated intentions was manifested in her sister Matilda, whose supercilious indifference towards Allan Latimer was suddenly succeeded by the most forward and pointed advances. Mrs. Latimer's son, with his pitiful income and worse prospects—an unequivocal *detrimental*—was very well by way of amusement, and as a *dernier ressort*, in the country. As the merchant's heir, however, he presented himself to her calculating mind in a totally different light. His youth was now a recommendation rather than an objection; the Cheltenham Nabob was forgotten; and in the determination to captivate the future proprietor of the Manor-House, she spared no artifice, and hesitated at no lure that might decoy him into her snares. She was even indelicate enough to communicate her intentions to her father, whose co-operation she felt to be necessary; and that unscrupulous personage, warmly approving her schemes, and looking upon Allan as a raw, inexperienced young man, expressed a perfect confidence that by their joint machinations they would very shortly

wheedle and cajole or hamper and entangle him beyond all possibility of extrication.

How Brown's housekeeper had been employed in the mean time, and what were her impressions as to the recent occurrences at Woodcote, will be best explained by the following

Letter from Mrs. Glossop to Mrs. Jellicoe.

"*Ma share* Mrs. Jellicoe,

"I am very glad to find by your letter that you are going to learn French, seeing the great advantages that I have derived from it, especially from picking it up by the ear; but as to your being assisted by Mrs. Gribble, that's all stuff and nonsense. You say that she has been to the Continent, but we went further—we proceeded to Geneva, where we saw the real *montagne Russe*, not the Brummagem ones in the Tivoli Gardens.

"Well, *ma share*, here we are settled at last, after so much bustling and racketing with carpenters, and upholsterers, and men of all sorts, that my poor head was almost

M 2

in a perpetual *tate-a-tate*. The bed-rooms are now completely furnished: I have got a new store-closet fitted up in my house-keeper's room, and if it wasn't that my chimney smokes a little when it makes *mauvay tong*, I should say that the whole house was quite a *bo ideal*. The garden, too, in the summer will be full of *agrimongs*, and the *coo dool* very *jolly*, for the little stream that used formerly to supply the fish-ponds is turned into a limping brook, which goes philandering round the grounds, so that you can't walk twenty yards without having to cross a little wooden bridge, which I think a very troublesome *fasson de parlay*.

"Master has begun giving dinners, and I am proud to say that we have done more than *notre possible*, and that everything was quite *come il fo*, spite of Sir Gregory's man-cook, who laughed one day at our having so few *casseroles* and no hot plate, and ridiculed our *pot-o-foo*; but I soon let him see that we had a very good *battery de quizzing*, and gave him as good as he brought. You know

that my master is particular stubborn in all his old-fashioned ways and *a la mode* habits; his laws, when they are once laid down, being as incombustible as those of the ancient Swedes and Prussians—*tong pea* !

“ And now, *ma share*, *ecoutay voo*, for I have the strangest adventure to relate that you ever heard. John Chubbs, a farmer of this place, was returning from Cheltenham in his white market-cart (the French call it a *carte blanche*), when a large live horrid monk jumped smack into it, without ever saying *meal pardon*, as they always do in France when they are guilty of any such gross act of *espieglerie*. He wore a black robe with a scowl, a hosiery of beads, and a crucifix hanging from his girdle, and declared to Chubbs (*shay voo*) that he was a manumissionary from Rome, come over to convert us all to Popery, with all its *shevoo de frise* of particular confession, and the washup of dirty saints with holy water. *Mon doo*, *ma share*, did you ever hear of anything so awfully *nonchalong* ?

“ Mr. Crab, a friend of master's, says he

agrees with one Mr. Horace Walpole, 'who said that what he objected to was the fasts and the miracles of the Catholics;—they give me, says he, too little to eat, and too much to swallow. The story made a laugh at our dinner-table as if it was a *bonbon*, but I can't say I see any *come say droll*, nor any great *pour rire* in it, do you? Mr. Crab declares the Pope will send over a bull to gore us all into the pale of the Catholic Church, and he talked of our being tossed on the horns of a dilemmer, or some such horrid animal; only think how dreadfully *degagay*! I do hope they'll put his nasty bull in the pound, or cut its throat with a *coo de grass*. At other times Mr. Crab laughs at the monk story; and when master was carving the leg of mutton t'other day, he recommended him to cut out the Pope's eye, as he couldn't then see what he was about. For my part, I think it no laughing matter—I'm fairly frightened out of my *amour propre*. In short, *ma share*, I am living in a constant state of *epouvantable*, especially at night, when I am kept

awake by the cats, who come to make *lay lose yew* under my window, and there they keep caterwauling as if for a wager—quite *a key mew mew*, as the French say. But I must really *mettre fang* to this terrible long letter, and so for the *momong* I subscribe myself, *ma share* Mrs. Jellicoe,

“*Toojoor a voo,*

“MARY GLOSSOP.”

CHAPTER XI.

WOMEN may be mistaken as to the motives, feelings, and affections of men, but the sympathy of sex gives them a more penetrating insight into the heart of females. Timid and bashful as was the character of Ellen Molloy, and more particularly guarded as had been her recent deportment towards Walter Latimer, the secret of her affection for him had been long since discovered by Matilda, who, treating it as a mere girlish flirtation, did not condescend to notice it. But when Ellen, in the vain hope of masking the real state of her heart, avoided Walter as much as possible, and transferred her attentions to Allan, her sister looked upon it as a most unwarrantable interference with her own "vested rights,"—a treachery the

more base because it occurred at the precise juncture when Brown's intention of making Allan his heir was strongly suspected, if not fully established. Judging of her sister by herself, she did not doubt that the hope of inveigling the future proprietor of the Manor-House had been the sole and most unworthy motive of the late alteration in her conduct. So sudden a substitution of one brother for another was ungenerous to Walter, most mercenary as regarded Allan, insulting to herself. The very thought of being thus supplanted was intolerable; but though she had hitherto exercised an absolute authority over her sister, whose amiability had always prompted her to yield rather than contend, Matilda was too haughty even to command her withdrawal from the field. No; she would inflict a more pointed and severe chastisement—she would triumphantly bear off the prize in the very face of her rival.

A scheming brain and not very scrupulous delicacy soon created opportunities for forwarding this design. All of a sudden

she was smitten with the rage of sketching from nature, of taking lessons on the piano-forte, and of resuming her harp, which had long been resigned to its green-baize cover, on account of the inconvenient expense attending the replacement of the broken strings,—in all which pursuits Allan was invited to be her teacher and assistant. By this arrangement she had a constant excuse for dropping in at Mrs. Latimer's cottage, or for asking Allan to come over and tune her harp, which she contrived to keep in frequent need of his aid and adjustment. The billets despatched across the common, either by Carlos the page or by Valentine, were always couched in the most flattering terms imaginable ; but these epistolary compliments, however fulsome, were poor indeed compared to the full battery of blandishments brought to bear upon him in their personal interviews, which she always managed to appoint when Ellen was absent, and her father purposely out of the way. Running out to meet him upon one of these occasions, as he opened the gate of the little front garden,

she exclaimed, with her most winning smile of welcome, and an assumed flutter of delight—"How very kind of you to come across so quickly! you are always so good-tempered, so obliging—no wonder that every one speaks so highly of you, that every one is delighted to see you, that every one loves you as well as.—Dear me! what am I saying? how my foolish tongue runs away with me!—but really when first I catch sight of you I am so confused, so overjoyed—I mean so thoughtless—that I hardly know what I am talking about."

"How can I hesitate to obey your summons," said Allan, "when you always give me so cordial and so flattering a reception? But is not your politeness exposing you to the risk of catching cold? The air is sharp, and you have neither bonnet nor shawl."

"True, true—how could I be so silly? The sight of you put everything out of my head. Come, we will hasten into the house." So saying, she proffered her arm, and, pressing close to his side, with an affected shudder at the cold, hurried him across the

garden. "You will be tired to death of me and my messages," she continued as they entered the parlour; "but I really cannot tune this tiresome harp; indeed I can do nothing now—I am grown quite stupid."

"I would not hear thine enemy say so," quoted Allan with a polite bow.

"Wouldn't you—wouldn't you indeed? How delighted I am to hear you say so! Not that I am aware of having an enemy in the world—it would distress me to think that I had, for mine is a heart formed for love rather than hatred. It is a great misfortune to be too susceptible. With such a disposition one cannot be long happy—Heigho!"

"But your spirits are generally very good, are they not?"

"They used to be," replied Matilda, suddenly bending upon the ground the eyes which had previously been fixed upon his with an expression of great tenderness; "but latterly I have lost all my cheerfulness, all my enjoyment of society—except when ——" Here she paused, attempted to blush

and look confused ; and then, starting from her seat, continued, "Come, come, I am in very good spirits *now*, so let us have a good long practice. Do you find many of the strings out of tune ?"

"Only two," replied Allan, trying and according them.

"What an exquisite ear you have ! But so it is in everything—the same fine organization, the same genius, renders you a proficient in all your pursuits."

"Nay, you will make me vain, and so spoil all my superfine qualities," laughed Allan, "if you pay me so many compliments. But I know that I don't deserve them, and so I won't allow them to turn my head. There ! your harp is now in perfect order, and the master (as bad a one, I fear, as most of the unprofessionals) longs to hear his pupil."

It happened, by mere accident,—an accident, however, which always recurred upon these occasions,—that Matilda, although it was morning, had arrayed herself in a dress with short sleeves—a casualty which will

occur now and then to young ladies whose fair arms retain their plumpness, while their other charms have begun to lose some small portion of their vernal bloom. Having arranged herself in her most becoming and attractive attitude, the harpist began to ply her hands and arms to the best advantage,—an object to which she seemed to attach greater importance than to the accuracy of her performance. It was soon found that the trimming of her sleeves interfered with the strings, and Allan was requested to tuck it up,—an office which he could not perform—it was not meant that he should—without complimenting her on the fairness of her skin and the pretty dimples in her elbow. The player was doomed to be incommoded on that unlucky morning, for shortly afterwards her comb came out, and her hair, of which she was justly proud, fell about her throat and shoulders in very picturesque profusion.

“Do help me, Allan,” cried the distressed damsel, trying in vain to gather up her scattered locks; “you are clever and handy at everything, so pray be my *coiffeur* for

once and a way, and assist me to recover the truant honours of my head."

"Honours, indeed! tresses worthy of Berenice," said Allan, endeavouring to obey her commands, but with so little success, that she petulantly exclaimed, "I had no idea you could be awkward in anything. Away with you! I can manage it better myself. Thanks, nevertheless, for your good intentions." With which words she tenderly pressed his hands in her own, and gently removed them from her ringlets. Hasty as was the new arrangement she gave to them, it was not without a view to effect, an object in which she proved so successful that Allan pronounced the change to be a decided improvement.

From the long intimacy that had subsisted between the families, from Allan's unsuspecting nature and ignorance of the world, and more especially from the pre-occupation of his thoughts and affections, he attached no particular design to these enticements, further than to contrast the bold forwardness of one sister with the

modest and guarded demeanour of the other, —a comparison which increased his dislike of Matilda and his admiration of Ellen. This effect not having escaped the penetration of the Captain, who had prompted many of his daughter's machinations, and was deeply interested in their success, he determined to ensnare his prey, if possible, by giving him clearly to understand that he had won her affections, and thus appealing to his generosity or compassion,—a device in which Matilda did not scruple to become his confederate. Having, with some trouble, forced a ring upon her finger, she solicited the assistance of Allan, on his next visit, to withdraw it, declaring that she and her father had been making repeated but unsuccessful attempts to get it off. Here was an opportunity for coquetry, and inveigling arts, and affected complaints of being hurt, and cries of pretended pain, and fond looks from languishing eyes, none of which were neglected; but the crowning effect was reserved for the Captain, who exclaimed, when Allan had at length succeeded, “By

the powers! you're a clever fellow,—you have accomplished the job most famously; but if I know anything of 'Tilda's heart and affections, poor dear girl! she had ten thousand times rather you should put a ring upon her finger than take one off."

"Good Heavens, papa!" ejaculated Matilda, getting up her best extempore blush, and palpitating with an assumed confusion and agitation; "how could you ever! I declare I will never forgive you if you betray—if you divulge—Pray don't believe him, Allan. Really I feel so ashamed, so overcome, that I cannot look you in the face!" With these words she applied a handkerchief to her eyes, and sidled with a mincing step towards the door, which Allan opened for her, saying, as she passed, "Nay, nay, Matilda, you must forgive the Captain, for we all know that he will have his joke; he only talks this nonsense to tease you." This suggestion was a lucky impromptu on Allan's part; but it may be doubted whether Molloy would have acquiesced in his version of the affair, had not his mouth

been stopped by the sudden entrance of Crab, in whose presence he feared to practise machinations which, he well knew, would be instantly detected and unsparingly exposed.

Simple-hearted as he was, Allan now began to suspect that he had unwittingly and unintentionally won the affections of Matilda, and that her father, of whose principles he did not entertain a very exalted notion, was seeking an opportunity of entrapping him into a marriage. To discourage their joint hopes and avoid their snares, he declined all invitations and appointments, however tenderly worded might be the *billet doux* that came from Matilda, carefully restricting his visits and interviews to those occasions when the presence of other parties would secure him against a recurrence of recent blandishments, which he now began to consider as so many deliberate stratagems and plots. But Molloy, impelled by the double motive of procuring an advantageous settlement for his eldest daughter, and a prospective money-lender

for himself, resolved not to be easily baffled ; and as both cajolery and blandishments had failed, he determined to try the effect of intimidation. To justify this *dernier ressort* it was necessary to devise another scheme,—one that should excuse him in the eyes of the world for having recourse to extreme measures,—one which should place Allan in a dilemma from which he could not possibly escape except by marrying the daughter or fighting the father. In justice to Matilda it must be recorded that she positively refused at first to co-operate in a scheme which she found revolting to her feelings, unfastidious as they were ; and it was only after the repeated declarations of her father, to whom she was sincerely attached, that in love and war all stratagems were fair,—that the preservation of himself from a prison, and of his family from utter ruin, depended on the success of their enterprise,—it was only after reiterated statements of this nature, enforced by alternate commands and entreaties, that Matilda, justifying herself under the plea of filial obedience, suffered

her scruples and her repugnance to be overcome.

Brown had erected a summer-house in his grounds commanding a view of the adjacent country, to which Allan now resorted almost daily to complete a large water-colour drawing, intended when finished to be presented to the proprietor of the mansion. While thus occupied one morning, the door was opened, and Matilda walked in with her portfolio, giving a well-acted start and exclamation as she saw Allan, and protesting that, not having the least idea it was occupied, she had betaken herself to the summer-house for the sake of making a little pencil sketch for her album. Although somewhat disconcerted by her appearance, Allan could not do otherwise than place a chair, resign a portion of the table, and spread out the implements for her purpose, intending to retire as soon as he had completed these preliminary arrangements; but she detained him by inquiring whether he had heard that the mysterious monk had again been seen

prowling about the neighbourhood in the dark, and, as some said, actually skulking through the grounds of the Manor-House. Several similar attempts to retreat from the summer-house had been baffled by fresh inquiries about the same inscrutable stranger, and expressions of the horror she should feel were she ever to encounter him, when a sudden rustling was heard in the shrubs at the back of the building. Matilda uttered a faint cry of terror, ejaculated the words, "Good Heavens ! he is here !—Save me—save me !" and threw herself into Allan's arms ; contriving, as she did so, to shake her bonnet from her head, to let her hair fall about her ears, and to assume an appearance of the utmost alarm and confusion,—at which precise moment Captain Molloy threw open the door and walked into the little room. "Ho, by the powers ! it's here you are," he exclaimed, with a voice and look of displeasure and surprise ; "it's all very well—all very well ! I've long known you were deeply in love with one another : but, lookye, Master Allan ; there has been

no regular declaration and acceptance, and all that sort of thing,—none, at least, that I have heard of; and though I know dear "Tilda to be as good and as discreet a girl as ever breathed, I can't allow these private meetings and clandestine assignations, and all this tender love-making in a retired summer-house. No, no; we must have it all straightforward and aboveboard."

"On my soul, Sir," exclaimed Allan, reddening with anger at these injurious charges, and endeavouring to get rid of the damsel, who, however, evinced no inclination to quit so very interesting an attitude—"On my soul, Sir, you are mistaken! there is not a shadow of ground for these accusations and suspicions; and you ought to know—nay, you must know—that I am incapable of the conduct you would impute to me. Our meeting was perfectly accidental. Miss Molloy came here to sketch—you see she has brought her portfolio and drawing materials."

"And does she usually sit in your lap, or rather recline in your arms, when she is thus occupied?"

“Your daughter, Sir,” replied Allan, blushing,—for he felt that her situation must present an awkward appearance—“heard a rustling in the bushes : we had been talking of the mysterious monk ; she imagined that he was approaching, and, being overcome with alarm, she flew towards me for protection. Were she sufficiently recovered from her agitation, I am sure she would confirm every word of my statement.”

“My dear papa !” sighed Matilda, whose voice and senses became suddenly restored at this critical moment—“you shall know the whole truth : there is not—there cannot be—the smallest occasion for longer concealment : indeed there is nothing whatever that either of us need be ashamed to avow. It was the fear of your approach that made me faint away ; for as you had not been acquainted with the attachment that has for some time subsisted, I foresaw that you would be angry (you know, dear papa, how passionate you are) at my thus meeting Allan.”

“Nay, nay, Tilda ; if it’s a mutual attach-

ment, I have nothing further to say : but Allan, my dear fellow, why did you not pop the question to me as well as to the girl? You need not have been afraid of me. There's not a young chap in all England that I should prefer for a son-in-law. So give me your hand,—'Tilda is ready enough to give you hers,—and let us say it's a bargain, and a settled affair."

Almost breathless with astonishment, and hardly crediting the evidence of his senses, Allan drew back from the proffered hand ; deposited his charge, in spite of her returning helplessness, in a chair ; and exclaimed, with a voice and look that attested his utter bewilderment, "What strange mistake is all this? What is the meaning of this most singular——Do I hear, do I understand you rightly? Miss Molloy must be labouring under a delusion for which I am utterly unable to account, when she talks of our mutual attachment."

"O Allan, dear Allan!" ejaculated Matilda in an impassioned tone; "you will not surely deny—you will not reject—you are

a man of honour—I throw myself upon your justice, your generosity, your manly feeling.”

“Do you hear that, sir?” demanded the father sternly: “do you see the poor girl’s distress, and have you the heart to hesitate for a single moment?”

“Remember that my fair fame is at stake,” resumed the daughter, who seemed anxious to prevent Allan from speaking. “Your marked attentions have been noticed by everybody,—this morning’s occurrence may get whispered abroad,—and I shall never again be able to hold up my head, unless—” The remainder of the sentence was lost by the application of a handkerchief to her eyes, and an apparent burst of irrepressible emotion.

Allan availed himself of the interval to address the Captain in a very decided and emphatic tone. “If both yourself and your daughter, Captain Molloy, are really labouring under this most erroneous impression, I can only say that I have done nothing whatever to occasion it. So far from my having

made any advances to Miss Molloy, I have, for some time past, studiously declined your invitations, and avoided meeting her. How we now met I have fully and truly explained to you. Nothing have I said or done that could in the most remote degree compromise her fair fame—never have I in any way sought to gain her affections ; and though I have hitherto cherished a proper regard for her as a neighbour, I have never for a single moment contemplated the idea of making her my wife.”

At this most explicit declaration the distressed damsel uttered a very well executed cry of mental anguish, again buried her face in her handkerchief, to conceal the absence of tears, and sobbed convulsively ; whereupon the father, seeing that nothing was to be expected from cajolery, resolved, as it had been preconcerted, to try the effect of intimidation. “ Harkye, sir ! ” he cried, advancing with a stern look : “ I am not a man to be bamboozled, and I tell you plainly that this shuffling manœuvre won’t serve your turn.”

“ Shuffling manœuvre ! ” exclaimed Allan,

indignantly ; “ that term may be more applicable to others than to me. I throw it back in your teeth.”

“ Faith, then, you’ll find no shuffling on my part ! Lookye, young man : you would hardly like me, I suspect, considering your expectations in that quarter, to report your conduct to Mr. Brown, which I shall do immediately unless——”

“ You are welcome to report it to him or any one. I have done nothing of which I have reason to be ashamed,—nothing that might not be publicly proclaimed to all the world.”

“ Oh, is it so, young gentleman ? Then, if you care not for exposure, you must prepare yourself for a different mode of treatment. Recollect that you have to deal with a soldier. I am Captain Charles Sullivan Molloy, of Clognakilty Castle, in the county Down, of one of the oldest and most distinguished families in Ireland, not a soul of whom was ever known to be insulted with impunity ; and if you don’t choose to give my daughter the satisfaction of a man of honour—*by*

the powers you must prepare to give myself the satisfaction of a gentleman."

"No, no ; for Heaven's sake recall the word !" exclaimed Matilda in an apparent agony of terror. "The very thought is dreadful—you are a dead shot—no one has ever escaped your fatal aim. What would become of me, if——" She hesitated, as if the possible catastrophe thus conjured up were too horrible for words ; but the allusion, instead of intimidating Allan, as it was intended, produced a contrary effect. He began to suspect that the whole scene was a conspiracy in which the father and daughter were confederates ; he feared that his temper, naturally impetuous, might hurry him into some violence of speech or action which he would subsequently repent ; and, making a vehement effort to suppress any such ebullition, he said, with a forced calmness of tone and manner, "Captain Molloy, I am young and inexperienced, but I am neither to be wheedled nor intimidated. On my soul do I again assure you that your conjectures are utterly groundless,—that your daughter is

the victim of some lamentable delusion,—that my demeanour towards her has been most guarded and irreproachable—facts of which I am confident you yourself will admit the truth when you have dispassionately reviewed my whole conduct, and have received such further explanations as I shall always be ready to give you. For the present I dare not prolong our conversation, lest I should hurt your feelings, and irritate my own beyond all power of control.” With these words he bowed courteously to the father and daughter, and hurried out of the summer-house.

In a state of perturbation and excitement that rendered him hardly conscious of his actions, poor Allan made his escape from the back gate of the premises, and walked rapidly across the fields, revolving in his mind the recent scene, while he endeavoured to take counsel of his own confused thoughts as to the course which it might be most prudent to adopt. So completely had he been taken by surprise in the summer-house, that he had been unable to think, much less to

deliberate, upon the best means of disabusing the Captain, if he were really deceived, or of defeating his scheme, if, as he strongly suspected, he were seeking to entrap him for Matilda. For a moment it had occurred to him that these objects might be attained by confessing his attachment to Ellen ; but the fear of exposing and humiliating Matilda in the presence of her father had put a seal upon his lips. The rapidity of his progress seeming to increase the confusion of his thoughts, he rejected one scheme after another as they suggested themselves, utterly unable to determine upon any feasible mode for extricating himself from his difficulties. Bewildered and fatigued, he sat down at length upon a stile, bordered by a tufted shaw of underwood, through which ran the brooklet that subsequently found its way to the gardens of the Manor-House. Over his head an ancient decayed oak threw out its cankered limbs, gnarled and knotted, and twisted into a thousand angular contractions, as if they were convulsed by the spasms of old age : it stood alone, seeming to have

survived or destroyed every other tree ; and might well have typified the time and grief stricken Saturn, as he sat in forlorn solitude, after having devoured all his offspring. It was like a frowning and a shattered wreck thrown upon a smiling shore, for every other object was fresh, and young, and pleasant. Nature's invisible orchestra was making symphonious music ; an unseen bird, and the concealed waters, attuned themselves to the breeze as it played upon the leaves of the rustling thicket ; and Allan, whose exquisitely sensitive ear derived pleasure from every species of harmony, while his imagination was ever stimulated by the mysterious melodies of the fields, soon felt the soothing influence of the scene and sounds by which he was surrounded. His anger and his irritation were appeased, his faculties cleared, and after a quarter of an hour's calm deliberation he determined to seek Ellen, to make a full and frank declaration of his attachment, and if, as he fondly anticipated, he should obtain her consent, to proceed immediately to her father, and claim

his sanction to their union. Thus would he effectually disprove all his injurious suspicions,—thus would he completely exculpate himself from the charge of having practised upon the affections of Matilda,—thus would he remove all possible ground of difference or reproach. How far he might compromise himself and his prospects with Adam Brown by taking so important a step without his advice and concurrence he would not stop to inquire ; immediate decision was urgent, or the Captain might anticipate him with his misrepresentations and his calumnies ; he would see Ellen, disabuse and conciliate her father, and then hasten to the Manor-House to communicate what he had done, and solicit the consent of his friend to the marriage. With these resolutions he jumped from the stile, and walked rapidly onwards in the direction of the common.

CHAPTER XII.

THIS was doomed to be rather an eventful day in the usually monotonous records of Woodcote. A lad named Jem Harris, the same who may perhaps be remembered as having been stationed in the elm-tree that fronted the Green Man, to give notice of the Squire's first appearance, had recently been appointed to carry the cross-post letters to Charlton Abbots. Proud of the leathern case strapped over his shoulder, and duly remembering that he was the messenger of weal or woe, on whose speedy and straightforward footsteps might depend the fate of many a palpitating heart, he never loitered or lingered by the way, except to make a football, now and then, of a round pebble, which he would follow for some time

whithersoever his kick might send it—or to run up the banks, or down into the hollows, to gather flowers,—or to creep along under a hedge to have a good shy at a sparrow,—or to climb up a tree in which he might happen to discern an irresistible bird's nest. With these trifling exceptions, no lad in the world could be more expeditious and undeviating in his course, especially when he passed through a village, on which occasions, as if conscious of his new dignity, he stepped forward in double-quick time, and would hardly pause even to answer an inquiry or a salutation.

Envious of his promotion, his former playfellows of Woodcote were apt to pursue him with the old and very superfluous inquiry of "Who took Chubbs's cart for the Squire's carriage?"—generally keeping out of reach of his reply, for Jem was a sturdy lad, and had sometimes left his mark, by way of answer, on the faces of his questioners. Foremost among these petty persecutors was the incorrigible mischief-lover young Valentine, who was emboldened in

his malice by the knowledge of his own superior strength and prowess. A long practice, however, of throwing at birds had rendered Jem Harris an expert shot, and a stone by which he once transmitted a rejoinder to this tormentor inflicted so severe a blow upon his arm, that he was glad to run home, writhing with pain.

For this well-merited chastisement the young scapegrace vowed vengeance,—nor was he long in executing his threat. To save the angle of coming up to the bridge by the Green Man, Jem was accustomed to cross the brook lower down, at a ford made by some large stepping-stones. Recent heavy rains and the accumulated waters from the Cotswold Hills having considerably swollen the brook, the stepping-stones were no longer visible, and the ford would have been impassable, but that some of the villagers, for their own accommodation, had thrown a plank across the now brawling stream, securing it to the bank on either side. Just at the time when the young letter-carrier was in the habit of crossing,

Valentine loosened one end of the board, hiding himself in the bushes to await the result of his contrivance, the perfect success of which was doubly attested by a loud splash in the water, followed by his own shrill laugh and triumphant cry of "Crikey, what fun!"

A good ducking had been the full extent of his intended malice; but it is generally difficult to foresee the end of a practical joke. Deeper and more rapid than he had anticipated, the stream carried off the immersed boy, whelming him for a moment from sight, when Valentine, frightened at the probable consequences of his own mischief, burst from his concealment and ran along the bank calling aloud for assistance. Walter Latimer, who happened to be returning homeward by the brook-side, heard the cry, and no sooner caught sight of the struggling boy than he plunged into the stream to save him,—an act of less easy accomplishment, even to a good swimmer, than it might have seemed, for the waters in this precise spot spread out to some width,

and whirled round in occasional eddies difficult to resist; while the clinging boy, impeding the action of his limbs, threatened to drag them both to the bottom. At this alarming sight a new terror took possession of Valentine, who rushed back towards the bridge, screaming "Help! help! Mr. Walter will be drowned!"

Fortunately his alarm proved groundless; the boy and his rescuer reached the shore in perfect safety, though not without some little difficulty; but the rumour of the accident, gathering a darker character as it travelled, lasted much longer than the danger. The laundress, who lived close to the ford, told the baker that Jem Harris had been drowned, and Mr. Walter had been dragged out of the brook in a state of insensibility; the baker informed the butcher's wife that both had been drowned; the butcher's wife affirmed that the laundress had seen Mr. Walter carried home on a shutter quite dead: and thus the story travelled through the village, while Walter, who had hurried home for the purpose, was

hastily changing his clothes, that he might, by presenting himself to his mother and Allan, who were gone to visit a poor cottager in the neighbourhood, disprove any exaggerated and alarming accounts of the accident. In the mean while, Carlos, the page, having picked up the worst version of the affair, ran back to his master's cottage, and, seeing Ellen in the front garden, blurted out the frightful story exactly as he had heard it.

Its effect upon the poor pining love-sick girl, whose nerves were little able to sustain so violent a shock, was almost maddening. Without staying to question her informant, without uttering a single word, she rushed screaming across the common, her hair floating upon the wind, her eyes starting from their sockets, her bosom vehemently heaving, and her face distorted with all the ghastliness of terror. Just as she reached Mrs. Latimer's garden, the gate of which was open, Walter emerged from the door of the cottage, when, with a shriek of joy and a burst of uncontrollable emotion, she bounded

forward, threw her arms around his neck, and fainted away. Not less frightened than surprised at so startling an occurrence, Walter carried her into the parlour, and laid her upon the sofa, utterly at a loss to know what measures to adopt for her recovery, beyond throwing open the window and chafing her hands; his agitation and alarm every moment increasing, when he saw that she exhibited no signs of returning animation. In great perturbation of spirit he ran to seek the maid, and, not immediately finding her, hurried back to the parlour, by which time the effect of the air had revived the sufferer, who opened her eyes with a deep-drawn sigh, and, tenderly pressing the hand which had again been placed in her own, murmured in a low but eager whisper, "Are you indeed safe? are you quite, quite sure that you are unhurt?—Dear, dear Walter! they told me you had fallen—that you had been—that you were drowned!"

"Dearest Ellen! compose yourself, I entreat you. There is not the smallest cause

for this fearful agitation ; I have not received the least injury."

"Thank God ! thank God !" ejaculated Ellen, clasping her hands passionately together, and sinking down upon her knees beside the sofa, though she could hardly sustain herself, so vehemently did her whole frame tremble. " My brain seemed on fire when they told me—I should never, never have been able to survive your loss—I should never—Good Heavens ! what am I saying?—where am I?—how came I hither?—let me return home—What—Oh, what will you think of me?" A burning blush suffused her features, she burst into an hysterical passion of tears, and buried her face in her hands, overwhelmed with shame and confusion.

"What shall I think of you?" cried Walter, again lifting her up, and pressing her to his heart as he did so. "Think that I shall never be sufficiently grateful for this deep, this delightful, this soul-thrilling interest in my safety—an interest which emboldens me—Pardon me, dearest Ellen, for

seizing this moment of your distress to say so, but I cannot any longer conceal the secret of my bosom ; I love you—have ever loved you—fondly, passionately, uncontrollably. Surely, surely, dear Ellen, you will not make me the most miserable of men by—No, no, you cannot—you will fill my heart with joy, with transport, with ecstasy, by receiving my plighted troth—my solemn vow of unalterable constancy and attachment.”

A convulsive sob and a fresh burst of tears being the only response to this impassioned appeal, Walter again pressed her to his heart, softly whispering, “ Will you not speak to me, dear Ellen ? will you not give me a single word of hope ? ” Too timid and bashful to look her lover in the face, the poor girl dropped her head upon his bosom, murmuring, in an almost inaudible tone, “ Dear Walter ! it is of no use—it is too late now for concealment—I have betrayed my secret. My heart, my whole heart is yours ! ” Another fond embrace testified the exulting delight of her companion, who

poured forth his grateful feelings in that strain of fervent and spontaneous eloquence which none but a happy lover can command, thus affording time to Ellen, as her ear drank in the delicious music of his vows, to recover some portion of her self-possession.

Though yet unable to raise her eyes, her deep emotions at length found a voice : it seemed as if her heart, so long oppressed by the secret pent within it, rejoiced to pour it freely forth, and she confessed the whole history of her attachment, her vain efforts to restrain it, as well as the motives of her apparent estrangement from himself and recent attentions to his brother, with an unreserve and fulness that evinced the pleasure she took in the relation, even of her own struggles and sufferings.

Life presents few moments more entrancing than this first declaration of mutual love, this communion of soul, this outpouring of one heart into another, this interchange of confidence and vows, which, while it imparts a delicious sweetness to the present, entwines a wreath of hope and

rapture around the brows of coming time. No wonder that Ellen lingered over this first enchanting vision, after so many dreary months of secret sorrow : no wonder that a tear stole down her blushing cheek as she made confession of her own long-cherished attachment, and listened to the avowal of Walter's. "Dearest Ellen !" he exclaimed ; "delightful as it is to hang upon your words, I cannot allow you to proceed if the recital thus distresses you. If I see another tear upon your cheek, I must positively kiss it away."

"They are tears of pleasure," was the whispering reply ; "but if they give you pain I will try to check them." Even as she spoke a pearly drop stole down her cheek : her lover affectionately performed his threat ; notwithstanding which, another and another still succeeded, to be chased away by the same unresisted process, as if she were determined to show that hers were truly and indeed tears of pleasure. In this intoxication of the heart she found so sweet a recompence for the suppressed misery of her recent life, that

for some time she suffered her emotions to flow unchecked ; but the stern realities of their situation, the impediments that opposed themselves to their marriage, and which were just as insuperable now as they had been before, at length forced themselves upon her unwilling recollection.

“ Alas ! dear Walter,” she sighed ; “ there may be, there is, an exquisite delight in this mutual confidence, in the dear certainty that we love each other ; but this knowledge must go no farther ; here for the present must our prospects end. Of any greater happiness—of the devotion of our lives to each other—alas ! alas ! I see but little prospect.”

“ Nay, nay, dear Ellen, speak not thus despondingly : surely we may hope.”

“ Yes, even against hope ; but I love you too well, dear Walter, to condemn you to a struggle with poverty and difficulties that might plunge us both into irretrievable ruin. You could not incur any additional expenses, however small, without diminishing the comforts of your dear mother, to which neither of us would ever consent. I am worse than

penniless, for I much fear that my poor father's increasing embarrassments, which must ultimately lead to some painful catastrophe, would inevitably involve in his downfall all those who may be connected with him;—while by our present union you would instantly sacrifice all chance of Mr. Brown's favour, whose angry denunciation of improvident marriages you have repeatedly heard."

"It is too true, all too true," sighed Walter; "and Heaven knows that I should shrink from the very thought of plunging you into quarrels, and struggles, and trials of any sort. Well, be it as you wish: for the present we will be nothing more than friends—but, oh! what dear friends shall we be! and as we have no other income, we will live upon hope. Who knows what chance or fortune may send us?"

"Chance has sent us, at all events, one happy, happy hour."

"Yes, as an earnest of many more to come; but to me there will be immediate, instant felicity in living near you,—in seeing

you every day,—in thinking of you whenever you are absent,—in knowing, in feeling, whether we are together or apart, that your heart and your affections are mine, dear Ellen, mine, mine !”

“ But we must not let it be known that we have thus plighted our troth: I would not have you run the risk of offending Mr. Brown upon any account, least of all upon mine. I had better hurry home—I feel quite equal to it now. I know not what I did, nor how I came hither. Can you forgive me for my folly—I might almost say my madness ?”

“ Dearest Ellen !” exclaimed the lover ; “ how can my lips talk of forgiveness when my heart feels nothing but unbounded gratitude and devotion ? Come ! you shall recross the common at a less perilous speed than on your last trip. Remember the happiness of my whole future life is now involved in your safety.”

“ And so is mine in yours, dear Walter, so prithee avoid the brook. Another such dreadful shock would be too much for me.”

Fortunately for Mrs. Latimer and Allan, they returned home by the fields at the back of the house, so that they heard nothing of the recent accident until, upon reaching the cottage, they received the particulars from Walter himself. Even the very thought of the danger he had incurred was almost too much for his affectionate mother, who, after fondly embracing him, hastened to her own room that she might pour forth her thanks to Heaven for his escape ; after which she set off for the Manor-House, in order to be the first to convey the happy tidings of her son's brave exploit, as well as of his safety, for he had mentioned the alarming rumours that were current.

The twins were thus left alone. Walter's disposition was in the highest degree frank and ingenuous ; hitherto he had never reserved a wish or a thought from his brother ; he felt that his heart would incessantly reproach him were he not now to impart its hopes and fears ; he foresaw no possible objection to the communication he was yearning to make ; and, premising that he had a

secret to reveal, which must be received, as it was made, in perfect confidence, he said, "Allan! this lucky day will for ever be marked in my memory with a white stone—I shall always look upon my plunge into the brook as the most fortunate occurrence of my life, not only as it saved young Harris from being drowned, but because it has led dear Ellen, who has just left the cottage, to disclose to me, in the unguarded agitation of the moment, the secret of her heart."

"Has it—has it indeed?" eagerly cried Allan, prepossessed with the notion that she was attached to himself, and had made a confidant of his brother. "Dear girl! how did it occur?—what did she say?—what led to the avowal?—Tell me every word she uttered."

"She confessed that she had long cherished a secret attachment, which had latterly become so difficult to disguise, that she had been compelled——"

"Yes—yes—I saw it—I felt it;—I myself have noticed the recent change. How singular, how fortunate, how delightful is

this anticipation ! for I had just made up my mind to speak to her on this very subject."

"She expressed a fear that you must have thought her late attentions to you rather pointed and particular."

"I did, Walter, I did; but I suspected the cause, and I need not say that I am delighted, overjoyed beyond measure, that the dear girl has acknowledged, has admitted—But how did she make the declaration? what were her exact words?"

"‘Your brother, I trust,’ (such, if I recollect rightly, were the terms she used,) ‘your brother, I trust, will excuse the seeming forwardness by which I only sought to disguise from you, from him, from everybody, even from myself if it were possible, the real state of my affections—to check, if I could, a love that I deemed hopeless, and to conceal the fact that my heart, dearest Walter, was, and ever had been, yours, and yours only.’"

"Yours, Walter, yours !" re-echoed Allan, his face suddenly reddening with deep emotion.

"Yes, mine. Had you never suspected,

never anticipated that the dear girl was always attached to me?"

"I know not—it never struck me. From her recent conduct, indeed, I had been rather led to infer——"

"What! that she had quarrelled with me! I don't wonder at your making that mistake, but I have already explained the motives of her avoiding me. Her seeming estrangement arose from too much love for me, not too little, dear girl! and she fondly avowed that the pang it gave her to assume a coolness when her heart was——But you are not listening to me, Allan; you want not to hear my lover's nonsense: and how pale you turn! Have you over-fatigued yourself with your walk?"

"No—not in the least. I was thinking that——yes——your intelligence has indeed surprised me—I was not prepared for it, and you cannot wonder at my being so deeply affected by it. What is your plan?—how do you mean to act? upon this subject you have told me nothing—not a word."

"Because we have as yet formed no plan,

decided upon nothing, except the resolution to keep our passion and our betrothal a profound secret for the present ; for we are both fully aware that our immediate marriage is entirely out of the question. I, as you well know, have nothing that can be spared ; the embarrassed state of the Captain's affairs is no secret to anybody ; and it would be madness to offend Mr. Brown, whose consent, after he has inveighed so often and so bitterly against pauper unions, as he calls them, it would be idle to expect." During this speech Allan had been walking up and down the room in an agitation of mind which he vainly endeavoured to conceal. It seemed as if he sought to allay it by locomotion, for he continued his exercise for some time in silence, then stopped suddenly and exclaimed, "So, then, you depend entirely upon the chapter of accidents ? If no fortunate event occurs, your marriage is as far off as ever ; and in the mean while you and poor Ellen are to be condemned to all the miseries of suspense."

"Such, Allan, is our present plight, which

will doubtless have its bitters as well as sweets ; and, alas ! I know not in what direction we are to look for the fortunate event that can alone dispel our fears and realise our hopes. Can you suggest anything that may tend to relieve us from this concealment and uncertainty ?”

“Nothing just now—nothing ; for my head is confused, and my feelings are too much excited to allow deliberation or thought of any kind. We will talk it over to-morrow—we will talk it over to-morrow.” Which words he continued unconsciously muttering to himself, as he left the parlour and walked hastily up-stairs to his own room.

Natural enough was it that poor Allan should be absent, disturbed, a prey to contending emotions ; for the life which had hitherto glided away as tranquilly as a placid river had this day been subjected to rude and ruffling agitations. The painful scene at the summer-house, and the embarrassing consequences which might result from the misrepresentations of the Captain and the anger of his disappointed daughter, had al-

ready vexed and irritated his spirit : to escape from the dilemma he had been on the point of seeking Ellen to make her an offer of his hand and heart, not doubting that it would be gladly accepted, when all his plans and hopes were utterly blighted by the discovery that he had been cruelly mistaken,—that he had been labouring under a fond delusion,—that she had declared her love for his brother, by whom her passion was reciprocated,—that they were irrevocably though secretly plighted and betrothed to each other ; and these cruel disappointments were more than enough to overwhelm the heart of any man, however firm might be his nerves.

Allan, during the sleepless night that followed the colloquy with his brother, was oppressed with a weight of woe such as he had never before experienced ; but though he might and did most deeply feel the prostration of all his hopes, his generous nature was incapable of envy or of any unworthy feeling. Not one moment did he hesitate in resolving to sacrifice his own wishes, and to forward by every means in his power the

happiness of the two beings whom he loved best upon earth—Ellen and Walter. There was a sweetness even in this surrender and abandonment of his dearest anticipations, for he felt that he should best restore his own peace of mind by securing theirs. How to accomplish this object was the question that chiefly occupied him during the night. Immediate flight from Woodcote presented itself to him as the first step that he ought to adopt, both out of consideration for himself and others; for he felt that he could not again meet either of the sisters without awakening the most distressing sensations, nor encounter the father without the hazard of an angry altercation—perhaps of a hostile collision, for he might not always be able to command his temper so successfully as he had done in that morning's interview. Let him contemplate his situation in what way he would, he still came to the conclusion that his temporary departure from home was absolutely indispensable, though whether he should fly, and what should be his future plans, he knew not. To make his

own retirement from the field establish, if possible, the felicity of Ellen and Walter, was now the paramount wish of his noble heart : how he proposed to accomplish this object will be seen in the succeeding Chapter.

CHAPTER XIII.

As Adam Brown sat in his little morning-room, posting up his account-books, the easy-chair in which he performed that office reminded him, as it had often done before, of the mysterious monk who had so uncere- moniously vaulted into Chubbs's cart. "Strange that we hear no more of that bugaboo of a fellow!" thought the merchant. "What the deuce could he want prowling about the house, staring at me through the iron gates as if I were a wild beast, and then taking to his heels like a pickpocket? If he wants his gold watch, why don't he ask for it?—wish he would;—have him then;—cross-question him a bit;—make him show how he came by it. Sha'n't give it up otherwise,—not such a fool. Nobody else comes to claim it. One would think

gold watches were as plentiful in the country as marigolds and buttercups. Wish they were,—worth walking in the fields then to hear them ticking all about you,—better fun than listening to a parcel of grasshoppers chirping.”

This reverie was broken by the sudden entrance of Allan, at sight of whom he hastily closed his books, exclaiming, as he eagerly rubbed his hands together,—his customary greeting to a welcome visitant,—

“ Ah, Allan, my boy ! you are out betimes this morning. All right, all right,—early to bed and early to rise. At Smyrna I was always up at five o’clock. Well, lad ! shall we walk down to Friar’s Field, to see whether those lazy rascals have finished the new hedge yet ? or shall we have a game of billiards before we start ? You want your revenge, I suppose, for the thrashing I gave you yesterday. That last cannon I made was a famous hit, wasn’t it ? ”

“ I shall be at your service for that or for anything else if you will first favour me with ten minutes’ conversation.”

“ Ten minutes ! ay, twenty, thirty, forty, if you like ; so sit down and talk away.”

After having taken a chair, and hemmed two or three times to clear his throat,—for poor Allan felt the awkwardness of his mission, and was most anxious not to give offence to his somewhat hasty and irritable companion,—he said, in a subdued voice, and with a deprecating look, “ I hope you will pardon me if I am taking an improper liberty in what I am about to state.—I would not, upon any account, displease you ; after all your kindness to us I should be ungrateful indeed were I capable of——”

“ Stuff ! flummery ! gammon ! what’s the use of all this beating about the bush ?—you know I hate it ; so if you have anything to say, out with it !”

“ At one time (I am sure I can never forget your generous intentions) you were kind enough to offer me a situation in your counting-house at Smyrna.”

“ Which you were ass enough to refuse ;—would have been a partner by this time. Well, what of that ?”

“ I feel that I did wrong, very wrong, to decline your proposal. I am tired of leading an idle and a useless life, and the purport of my present visit is to apprise you that I wish to leave Woodcote immediately, and to seek my fortune in some other place, —either in this country or abroad, I care not which.”

“ Wheugh !” whistled Brown, throwing himself back in his chair, and staring at his visitant with a look of utter amazement. “ What the deuce is in the wind now ? What new freak is this ? What’s come to the boy ?”

“ This resolution, I confess, has been very suddenly formed, but my mind nevertheless is quite made up to the measure. I hope you will give it your sanction ; and if you could assist me by your advice, or by kindly recommending me to some appointment——”

“ Not I, not I, Master Allan, depend upon it ! Here’s a pretty game of cross purposes and fast and loose ! You *will* stay at home when I want you to go abroad,

and you *will* go abroad when I want you to stay at home:—is this your gratitude for my favours? You pretended before that you couldn't leave your mother. How comes it that you can run away from her now?"

"Walter will be left to take care of her, and she has now so kind a neighbour in yourself, that——"

"You're a pretty fellow, and a grateful young gentleman, arn't you? Because I am kind to your mother, you think fit to fly in my face, to forget all my favours, and to leave me in the lurch, just at the time that I have begun to take a pleasure in your society, and to look every day for your coming up to walk, or drive, or play billiards with me! Was there ever such a spirit of pure contradiction? Sir, I won't give my consent to your nonsensical scheme,—and that's one word for all. Ha! ha!" So saying, he snatched his cane, and thumped it with an unusual vehemence upon the floor.

"And yet, Sir," persisted Allan, "it is

what you yourself proposed to me only a very few years ago."

"Because I had a good opening for you at Smyrna; but now I have, or at least I had, other thoughts and intentions. Why, Allan, boy! you are no fool—no dolt;—you have eyes and ears,—you can see, and understand, and take a hint, and have an eye to your own interest, as well as other folks; and you must have been aware, though I never have, and never will pledge myself to anything of the sort, that I had some thoughts of making you my heir,—that is to say, on certain conditions."

"And most grateful do I feel for your generous intentions,—indeed, indeed I do, though you shake your head with such an incredulous impatience; and as to my leaving you in the lurch, just as you have begun to find me a pleasant companion,—for thus were you pleased to term me,—I shall not run away without leaving a substitute much more worthy of your favour, much better qualified than myself to execute all those little offices in which you have been pleased to employ me."

“ And pray what may be the name of this worthy deputy ?”

“ My brother Walter ; as amiable and as excellent a creature as ever breathed, and who, I am sure, will be too happy to devote himself to your wishes in every respect.”

“ No doubt, no doubt ; and who will do me the honour, I suppose, to succeed to my fortune and estate, if I might ask so trifling a favour of him.”

“ That must of course depend entirely upon yourself ; but I venture to assert that whatever your liberality had intended to bestow upon me would be better conferred and more amply merited by him.”

“ Indeed ! and so you wish Walter, do you, to stand in your shoes ?”

“ Nothing would delight me more, though I repeat that I have no right to ask or to expect anything of the sort.”

“ And what mess of pottage are you to get, Mister Esau, for thus selling the reversion of your expectations to your brother ?”

“ Nothing whatever beyond the hope of doing him a most essential service, which to me would be the greatest of all pleasures.”

“ Allan Latimer, you *are* a fool, a dolt, an idiot, though I said just now that you were not: but have your own way, Sir, have your own way. I am willing to grant you one half of your request, for I will never have a jackass for my heir,—a blockhead who doesn't know the value of money, who would make ducks and drakes of my property,—send everything to the dogs: and so, Sir, I shall make an immediate alteration in my will, by omitting altogether the name of one Allan Latimer, who is such a born idiot as not to know on which side his bread is buttered.”

“ I must submit to your displeasure, although nothing could be further from my thoughts than any wish to incur it; but I hope, dear Sir, you will remember that Walter is free from offence, and that he richly deserves——”

“ Don't tell me,—don't presume to dictate

to me,—hold your tongue,—I won't hear you. I know what *you* richly deserve, you thankless young jackanapes, and you shall have it. Away with you!—quit the room instantly, and never let me see your face again! Not a word, Sir, not a word! What! isn't this my own house? Begone, I tell you! Ha! ha!" So saying, he rang the bell violently, and Allan, seeing that in his present chafing mood all further expostulation would be vain, made him a respectful bow, and sorrowfully quitted the apartment.

Totally unaccustomed to discord and wrangling, which were indeed peculiarly repugnant to his nature, and sincerely attached to Mr. Brown, it may well be supposed that Allan, whose feelings had already been painfully excited, did not leave the Manor-House in any very enviable frame of mind. Even in this aggravation of his annoyances, however, he found some little satisfaction from reflecting that the more the merchant was alienated from himself, the greater was the chance that he

would transfer his regards and his favours to his brother. He had set his heart upon accomplishing the happiness of Ellen and Walter, in the attainment of which object he was not only willing but eager to sacrifice his own.

Thus cogitating, he suddenly encountered his brother as he re-entered the cottage, when he told him in a hurried and agitated manner that, having had an unfortunate difference with Captain Molloy, as well as with Mr. Brown, he intended to withdraw himself for a short time from home, earnestly entreating his auditor to cultivate the friendship of the latter by every means in his power, as he would thus, in all probability, secure his ultimate sanction, and perhaps obtain some adequate provision, for the marriage with Ellen. As soon as Walter had recovered from the first amazement excited by his tidings, he began to cross-question him as to the cause of the dissension with the parties named, and the motives of his sudden flight from Woodcote,—interrogatories from which Allan could only

escape by pleading the necessity of making immediate preparations for his journey, and by hurrying off to his room. Enough, however, had transpired, for he was a bad hand at concealments or evasions, to awaken the suspicions of his brother, who, knowing his generous, disinterested, and affectionate nature, began to surmise the real state of the case.

With these impressions he hastened across the common to consult with his betrothed, not displeased at having so early an opportunity of showing the confidence he placed in her judgment, and of proving that he now considered their interests to be identical. "Noble-minded, great-hearted Allan!" exclaimed Ellen, when she had heard his statement: "I fear, indeed, that he has been sacrificing his own views and hopes to promote ours. Yes—I feel confident that you have divined his real motives. But, dear Walter! this must not—cannot—shall not be. Even if his generous wishes in our favour were to be realised, how could we consent to be benefited at his expense? how could we be

made happy by his exile and impoverishment? Impossible!"

"Precisely my own feelings, dear Ellen, though I would not give utterance to them until I had learnt your sentiments. How would you then recommend me to act, so as to detain Allan at home?—for I cannot bear the thought of his leaving us."

"See Mr. Brown immediately, and endeavour to effect his reconciliation with your brother."

"You advise me, dearest Ellen, just as I should have anticipated—with all the generosity and unselfishness of a true woman; and I trust that our sentiments may ever accord as entirely as they do now. I will hasten to the Manor-House at once, for Allan seemed to meditate a quick departure."

Most inauspicious was the moment when the kind-hearted mediator was ushered into the same little room from which his brother had so recently been ejected, for Adam Brown, who had ever since been nursing his resentment to keep it warm, had perfectly succeeded in his enchafing process. "I hope,

Sir, you will excuse the great liberty—"hesitated Walter, hardly knowing how to open so delicate a subject with so touchy a negotiator.

"Why, that's just the way your brother began," growled the merchant; "so I suppose you have some equally insulting proposition to submit to me. But harkye, Sir—it's right to let you know that I am in no humour to be bothered or bamboozled. What's the matter? what do you want? I heard all about your sousing into the brook: more fool you! Are *you* going to run away as well as your brother?—and if you are, what's that to me?—Off with you both!—Good riddance of bad rubbish."

"Indeed, Sir, I have no such intention. My brother, I fear, has been so unfortunate as to incur your anger and displeasure."

"How dare you suppose," demanded Brown, reddening with choler, "that I care enough about him to be angry? Sirrah! I'd have you to know that I never was better pleased—never was more gratified—never was more calm and placid in the whole

course of my life. Deuce take the block-head ! what the devil does he mean by running away from home ?”

“ Of that I know little more than yourself, but I still hope to turn him from his purpose, especially if I can prevail upon you to overlook his hasty determination, and to pardon any liberties or indiscretions of which he may have been guilty in his late interview.”

“ Liberties indeed—you may well say that !”

“ I suspect, Sir, that his brotherly affection may have perhaps led him to——”

“ Go on, Sir, go on—you’re quite right—quite on the right scent. Yes, Sir,—in his blind regard for you, and still blinder ingratitude towards me, he had the modesty to propose that whatever future favours I might have destined for himself should be transferred to you !”

“ I feared it—I knew it—I was sure of it. Generous, generous Allan ! O Sir ! let me implore you to forget, to forgive, an act of self-sacrifice which, however mag-

nanimous I may deem it, may appear in your eyes——”

“Come, come ; I don’t want any of your rantipole heroics—I want to understand it. Tell me the meaning of it all. What’s the premium, the money down, the consideration for this attempted barter of my friendship and favour ?”

“Sir, we are both equally incapable of devising any such compact among ourselves, or of taking any such unwarrantable liberty with you ; and one object of my present visit is to declare, as I do most unequivocally, that, even if you should be induced to make any diversion of your present or future favours, I would never consent to receive them at the expense of my brother.”

“How vastly considerate !—how particularly kind of you !—but you needn’t cry out afore you’re hurt. Perhaps you’ll wait till I ask you—wait long enough if you do. Zooks, Sir ! what right have you, or he, or any man, to fancy you can play at battle-dore and shuttlecock with my guineas ? Am I a fellow to be hoodwinked like a tame

hawk, or led by the nose like a dancing bear, or wheedled like a soft tommy, or plucked like a pigeon? Am I a fellow, I ask you, to be cajoled or cozened? Zounds, Sir! is a man of my age to be dictated to by a couple of ungrateful boys?"

"I have not presumed to dictate anything—I have merely disclaimed——"

"Well, Sir, that's dictation. What right have you to disclaim? Don't be afraid, don't be afraid: you will have no favours of mine to disclaim—that you may depend on."

"May I then venture to hope that Allan——"

"You may venture to hope nothing, and then you won't be disappointed," cried Brown, starting from his chair in high dudgeon. "As to Allan, he may go to the devil his own way, as I have already told him; and if you choose to accompany or to follow him, you are perfectly welcome. Good morning, Sir, good morning: I wish you both a pleasant journey. There I had you. Ha! ha!" The usual double rap of

his cane closed the sentence, and his hasty retreat from the room put an end to the colloquy, while the sharp striking of the ferrule, which continued for some time audible, attested his undiminished anger and indignation.

In fact, he was not only enraged but bewildered, which latter feeling rather aggravated the former. "If I could but understand what the fools are at," thought he, "what they mean, what they're driving at, I shouldn't mind it; but to be bamboozled with a puzzle which I can't help guessing at and can't find out, is enough to provoke a saint."

To the money-reverencing merchant the conduct of the twins did indeed seem an inscrutable mystery, only to be solved by supposing some total revolution to have occurred in the moral, or rather the financial, world. "Here have I," he soliloquised, as he walked rapidly up and down, "been toiling and moiling, and drudging and trudging from Smyrna to Constantinople and Alexandria and London, and back again

to Smyrna,—fagging early and late,—running all sorts of risks,—and tumbling overboard and injuring my health, to scrape together a fortune which these two young jack-asses are turning up their noses at, and kicking away from them. Surely the world's coming to an end, or else the people are all going mad. And here am I, getting an old man, without anybody to whom I can leave my property. I shall have to advertise, I suppose——‘Wanted an heir—lots of money to be given away, with an allowance to those who take a quantity.—N.B. Persons applying must carry it off the premises at their own expense.’ Things are come to a pretty pass, truly!”

Allan, in the mean while, remained in his own room making hasty preparations for his departure,—a process which he was compelled, such was the distraction of his thoughts, to recommence several times, and which after all was accomplished in a very slovenly manner. The chief perplexity that disturbed him, although many other vexations clouded his mind, was the pain of

leaving his mother without a formal farewell and an explanation of his reasons, and the fear that, if he confessed his intended flight, he should be unable to resist her affectionate remonstrances against it. Besides, how could he make confessions upon such delicate subjects without compromising both himself and others? or how could his mother, with all her tenderness and sympathy, enter into the feelings by which his bosom was lacerated? No, he would leave behind him a letter holding forth a prospect of an early return, and he would trust all the rest to the redoubled attentions and the kindly mediation of Walter, upon whose filial as well as fraternal good offices he knew he might implicitly rely.

Such were his resolutions when he was summoned to the family prayers, which were read every night, as well as morning, by Mrs. Latimer, who upon this occasion thought it right to record her devout gratitude for Walter's recent escape by adding the special thanksgiving for deliverance from any great danger. Overcome by her feel-

ings, the fond mother was hardly able to conclude it; her voice faltered, her hand shook, and the gathering tears that had obscured her vision at length fell fast upon the book. Now was it that poor Allan felt all the difficulty of concealing his intended flight,—of resolving to tear himself away, even for a time, from so devoted a parent, from such a household of love. His bosom heaved, his mouth was slightly convulsed, his eyes became suffused; and as he received his mother's good night, kiss, and blessing, he fell upon her neck, and sobbed outright with uncontrollable emotion.

After a miserable night he arose with the first dawn of day, snatched up the light portmanteau which he had prepared overnight, walked across the fields to Chubbs's farm, and, ere the first rays of the sun had yet struggled through the misty morning vapours, was seated in the market-cart, and jogging towards Cheltenham, giving but vacant and irrelevant answers to John's questions as to the cause of his taking so unexpected and so untimely a journey. Just

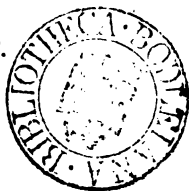
as they reached the town he saw a stage-coach on the point of starting, when, without inquiring its destination, he tossed his port-manteau into the boot, climbed to the roof, nodded his thanks to Chubbs, and in another minute was whirling rapidly along the road towards London.

END OF VOL. I.

ADAM BROWN,

THE MERCHANT.

BY THE



AUTHOR OF BRAMBLETYE HOUSE, &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

"When novelty's the rage, and love of change,
And things are doated on because they're strange,
How shall he fare whose unaspiring hack
Jogs on the broadway and the beaten track,
Leaps o'er no moral fence, nor dares to prance
In the wild regions of untried romance?"

CHARLES MOORE.

VOLUME II.

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ADAM BROWN.

CHAPTER I.

As the imagination has a larger grasp than the senses, there may be some truth in the dictum that the unknown always appears magnificent; but this position must be restricted to a certain class of aggrandizing processes. When their curiosity is baffled, people are apt to be rather indignant than magnifying, to make their ignorance an excuse for their ill-nature, and to pronounce all those impulses mean or unworthy which they cannot immediately and clearly fathom,—an ungenerous tendency which received abundant illustration in the case of Allan Latimer. High as his character stood, unexceptionable as had been his whole

VOL. II.

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career since his first settlement at Woodcote, there were not wanting tattlers to make the significant remark that he could not have gone away so suddenly for nothing, and to insinuate that, if there had been a good reason for his flight, it would undoubtedly have been brought forward by his family. Availing themselves of this logical deduction, and assuming the fact of a bad reason, since they had not heard a good one, the gossips set to work to ferret out what it was, each assigning his own theory, his own selected folly or misdemeanor, as the most plausible solution of the mystery. Let it be recorded, however, to the credit of the village, that others, more charitable and just in their conclusions, felt and expressed their confidence in Allan's honour and good conduct, and rebuked the whisperers of these injurious surmises.

Though no one could be more surprised and distressed at his unaccountable departure than his mother, not for a single moment was her mind clouded by any misgiving as to its causes. When some of her

prying neighbours kindly intimated their hope that he had not got into any scrape, or involved himself in any unpleasant embarrassments—phrases rather suggested by their curiosity than their sympathy—she replied with a placid smile, “I am as much in the dark as yourself, touching the real motives which have taken him from home for a short time, for he promises an early return; but I know my dear boy well; I know the principles in which he has been educated, and, whatever may have been his motives, I have implicit confidence in their propriety. Ours, thank God, has been a household of love; we have ever put trust in one another, and I have no fear that anything can have occurred to disturb it, or that this our first separation will be of long continuance. At times Allan may be a little hasty and impetuous, but his heart is in the right place, and, whatever may be his actions, depend upon it he will be well able to justify them when he comes back among us. Dear boy! blessings upon him wherever he may be!”

Accurately to describe the feelings of Matilda Molloy, when she learnt the flight of Allan would require a larger space than we can at present devote to the analysis. Although she could lay the flattering unction to her soul, that, as she had merely acted in obedience to her father's wishes, her conduct was filially meritorious, in the same degree that it might be deemed morally censurable, she could not help bitterly reproaching herself for the part she had acted. And yet, perhaps, it was the failure rather than the attempt that mortified and vexed her. Even while condemning herself, however, she hated Allan more bitterly than she had ever liked him, because her aversion was not in proportion to her previous predilection, but to her present disappointment.

It is well known that we generally dislike those whom we have injured, but there is a class towards whom we cherish a still more intense repugnance,—those whom we have sought to injure or cajole, and have been baffled in our attempt, within which category Allan might now be placed. Yet Matilda,

though a bold and forward girl, and rather unscrupulous where her prospects of an advantageous marriage were at stake, was not without a sense of right and wrong, which, in the present instance, maintained an occasional and harassing struggle with her wounded self-love and frustrated hopes. Time and reflection, where the mind is not thoroughly demoralized, generally mitigate our evil tendencies and fortify our good ones; and so it proved with Matilda, who, as her first anger and mortification gave way to a calmer retrospect of her recent conduct, found it much more easy to forgive Allan than herself.

As to Ellen, she had become quite an altered girl since the mutual confession of love and solemn betrothal with Walter. The long and anxious concealment which had "preyed on her damask cheek," the doubts and fears and humiliating self-reproaches which had depressed her spirits and undermined her health, were rapidly dissipated by the cheering certainty that her affection was deeply, sincerely, fervently

reciprocated. True, the difficulties that opposed their immediate union were as formidable as ever; but she could talk about that union with him to whom she had given her whole heart,—she could look forward to a future day-spring of happiness, however remote; and her hope had not yet been deferred long enough to make her heart sick. On the contrary, it fed upon that hope, and seemed to require no other sustenance to ensure its present felicity.

A girl feels such an exhilaration, such a sweetness, in possessing the affections of one whose preference exalts her in her own regard, and there is such a sublimising buoyancy in the young soul where this delightful sensation is experienced for the first time! Ellen's improved health and cheer of mind might almost have justified the averment of the French author, that the true honeymoon is that which precedes marriage, even where this antepast becomes extended over several months. Her guitar, and her singing, and all her former recreations were resumed, while frequent walks

and an interchange of entire confidence with her lover exercised an equally beneficial influence in restoring the roses to her cheek and a blissful serenity to her bosom. Both being equally averse from clandestine proceedings of any sort, both willing, and indeed determined, to defer their marriage until some change of circumstances should give it the warranty of prudence, Walter determined to seek some occupation that might hold out to him a prospect, however distant, of being enabled to support a wife, provided that object could be accomplished without separating himself from his mother, who had now double need of his society and solace.

“ My dear boy !” said Mrs. Latimer, when her son imparted his secret to her, and implored her sanction of the conditional arrangement he had made, “ you are sure of my assent to anything that may promote your happiness ; and as Ellen is a very good girl, gentle and kind, and affectionate like yourself, I dare say she will make an excellent wife ; but still, dear Walter, I cannot

help thinking you might have done better for yourself."

"Not in personal recommendations, mother; and as to ambitious views, they are foreign to my nature; I never indulged any aspiring thoughts."

"Nor I either: Heaven knows I have no right. It becomes me to be lowly, and humble, and unpresuming, both as regards myself and my family,—and I trust I am so. I would not look too high for you; quite the contrary: but you must confess that Captain Molloy's family, on various accounts, is not the most desirable one in the world to be connected with. Now, if you could only have found a girl equal in every respect to Ellen, only with a few trifling additions, such as superior birth, a handsome fortune, and powerful relations, I can't help thinking, somehow, that it might have been preferable."

"Very possibly," smiled Walter; "but would such a girl have me? What should I have to offer in return for such accumulated advantages?"

“ Yourself, dear Walter,” replied the mother, gazing on him with a proud and affectionate look ; “ as good and as true a man as ever blessed a woman with his love. *Have* you ! Why, a princess, a queen might be proud to have you.”

“ But as I don’t mean to propose either to a queen or a princess, and have plighted my troth to dear Ellen, I trust you will approve my choice.”

“ Ay, that I will, with all my heart and soul, if it will contribute to your peace of mind. And as to your looking out for some employment that may place you in a situation to marry sooner and with greater comfort, never mind me, dear Walter, if you can find anything at a distance. Allan, I dare say, will soon return, and, if not, I don’t mind being alone, not in the least. Only let me hear that you are getting on and doing well ; I shall not require anything else. Besides, Ellen will be always here, and I shall look upon her now as my intended daughter-in-law, so that I shan’t be dull.”

“ No, no, mother !” said Walter, tenderly

embracing her; "I should be the most ungrateful wretch in the world if I loved anybody half so well as you. I will not consult my own gratification at your expense, depend on't; indeed, I don't think I could feel any pleasure if I were to be separated from you."

"Bless you, my kind-hearted boy! I do not think you could. Ah! if our good friend Mr. Brown now would do something for you! Don't you think you had better inform him how matters stand between you and Ellen?"

"No, indeed; he was so cross and so rude the last time I called, that I have no wish to subject myself to a renewal of such treatment."

"Leave it then to me—I know how to manage him; and it is quite right that he should be apprized of your engagement."

Ellen's first communication was made to her sister, who received it without surprise, for the marked improvement in her spirits and health had already revealed her secret. Matilda was sincerely attached to her sister,

and had a strong feeling that a pretty girl like Ellen would be throwing herself away to marry a pauper, as she called Walter; under the influence of which double impression, she strenuously urged her to hold herself disengaged, and to take the chance of a visit to Cheltenham during the season, of which some hopes had been thrown out to them by the Captain. Finding her however inflexible in holding herself betrothed, though quite willing to pledge herself against any rash precipitation, and even to protract their marriage for years, should circumstances render it advisable, she consented, at Ellen's request, who felt herself unequal to the task, to impart the state of her affections and the fact of her betrothal to her father.

“Ho! by the powers! it's that way the wind blows, is it?” exclaimed the Captain. “Well, 'Tilda dear, if we can't secure that runaway Shabberoon Allan for you, it will be no bad spec to hook the brother for Nell. Walter's a nice young chap; but in his present plight, which is poor enough, and will be still worse when the old woman

hops the twig, we mustn't hear of any marrying, nor must a syllable be said upon the subject to old Brown."

"There I quite agree with you. It would offend him beyond measure; for he never loses an opportunity of uttering angry denunciations against improvident marriages and love engagements."

"Lookye, 'Tilda! this must be our course. By hook or by crook, Walter must succeed to his brother's place in the favour of old Brown, who has nobody else to whom he can leave his money; and to succeed in this object, we must take care to set him against Allan by every means in our power."

"That has been done pretty well already, for the old gentlemen t'other day desired me not to trouble my head about such a run-away, adding that he thought his behaviour towards me had been very scandalous."

"If we keep up that cry by running him down upon all occasions, and puffing Walter, my word for it he will soon be taken into favour, and stand in Allan's shoes; for the

old fellow can't do without some one to toddle about and play billiards with him."

"And if he adopts Walter, he may probably make a settlement upon him immediately, and allow him to marry Ellen."

"And then the old curmudgeon may die as soon as he pleases. By the bye, he seems breaking already, and Walter will have the Manor-House estate and all the money besides, and Walter is a good-tempered-soft Tommy of a fellow, who will bleed freely, and put his hand to an acceptance now and then,—he couldn't do less for his own daddy-in-law: and then, 'Tilda dear,—*by* the powers!—won't we make the kites fly, and rig ourselves out as fine as five horses, and cut a dash among the nabobs at Cheltenham, or perhaps astonish the natives at London, and pick up a rich husband for you as well as Nell!" Delighted with the vision he had thus conjured up, the Captain snapped his fingers, and joyously exclaimed, "Hurrah, then, girl, for Nell and Walter, and a wind-ing-sheet for the old hunks as soon as he

likes, that is to say, after he has settled everything upon my future son-in-law!"

At the recommendation of Captain Molloy, the force of whose arguments she immediately recognised, Mrs. Latimer was induced to abandon her intention of communicating to Mr. Brown the engagement into which her son had entered, willingly lending herself to the hope that, if Allan were finally to lose his favour, Walter might succeed to it, for she well knew that each would be ever ready to share his good fortune with the other. Adam Brown, in the mean while, the disposal of whose favour, fortune, and estate his neighbours were thus kindly anticipating, was in no very enviable state of mind. His health, as the Captain had truly stated, was again beginning to give way, and his temper, aggravated by the flight and unaccountable conduct of Allan Latimer, which was every day represented to him in a more unfavourable light, became at times exceedingly irritable. Inoccupation, and the want of a companion, added to his annoyances, under

which circumstances he was glad to snatch at a change of locality, however short, and the prospect of a new visiting acquaintance, however remote, by going to see a Mr. Tomlinson, a brother merchant, whom he had formerly known at Smyrna, and who, having also retired from business, had purchased a house about fourteen miles from Woodcote, on the banks of the Severn. Wishing to give his old friend an agreeable surprise, he would not announce his intention by letter, but set off in the carriage, having first consulted a map of the county, and given the deaf coachman special instructions as to the road he was to take.

“Tomlinson’s a good little fellow!” soliloquised the merchant, rubbing his hands in anticipation of a pleasant and a visitable neighbour—“very different from that daughter-pecked old fool Gregory Gibley—what’s his other name? never mind, I forget his *alias*. *There’s* an upstart! *there’s* a jack-ass on his hind legs! *there’s* a beggar on horseback! Talked of ducking me in the pond, didn’t they? wish they had—wish

they had smothered me in the mud : I'd have trounced them for it ! Shan't be happy till I've had that jackadandy son of his tarred and feathered. Little Tomlinson's quite a different chap : proud of being a merchant and making his own money. Not much to brag of, though, in his case. Had a father before him—ready-made business—nothing to do but to follow his nose, and that's not very difficult, for it's a precious long one,—points out the way like a finger-post. No, no ; little Tomlinson didn't run away from Woodcote with only seven and nine-pence in his pocket, ha ! ha !"—Testifying his pleasure at this reminiscence by three triumphant raps of the cane on the bottom of the carriage, he beguiled the remainder of the drive by anticipating the surprise of his old friend at his unexpected appearance, and by devising schemes for exchanging visits of a week's continuance at each other's houses, that they might relieve their present *ennui* by talking over old days. At the time when he calculated they ought to have reached their destination, he desired John

Trotman to make inquiries as to the direction of the house, and gave way to a burst of ill-temper when apprised that they had made an unnecessary *détour* of nearly three miles.

"Knew it all along," observed John Trotman very quietly and respectfully.

"Then, why the devil didn't you tell me?" demanded Brown angrily.

"Told you so twice before we started," was the reply: "seldom repeat the same thing twice, never three times." So saying, he made a motion with his finger to the deaf coachman, who turned round the carriage, and mended his pace that he might recover the ground they had lost. John was quite correct in his assertion. He never made inquiries, for that would imply talking, but he had a quick, almost an instinctive perception of bearings and localities, and he had twice set his master right when he heard him giving instructions to the coachman. Brown, however, whose active mind made him a regular factotum, and who believed that few people could know better than himself,

petulantly overruled his objections, desiring the coachman to mind his master, and not attend to that stupid fellow. Most servants thus rudely reprimanded, would have exhibited a little triumph at the proof of their own superior sagacity ; but, whatever John might feel on the occasion, his manner was as respectful, his look as phlegmatic and imperturbable as ever.

Reaching the house at length, and conning over the introductory speech with which he meant to mystify his old friend,—for Adam, even in his peevish moods, loved a little bit of waggy,—it would be difficult to describe his angry disappointment when he learnt from the servants that their master had left home on the previous day for Cheltenham, to which place he had resorted on account of the illness of his wife. “ Just like my infernal luck !” he ejaculated, with something very like an oath. But it serves him right—perfectly right ; and me too, for coming without writing. What *could* he expect ? wives are always ill—as well marry a hospital ! Never die though—know better

—live to plague their husbands. Well, thank God! *I* never married—not such an ass.”

As the horses could not set off upon their return until they had rested and baited, and there was no inn in the immediate vicinity, Brown willingly accepted the housekeeper's invitation that he should alight and partake such refreshment as the larder offered, while the horses were put up for an hour or two in the stable. Gratified as he was by this hospitable proposal, it did not soothe his bitter disappointment at the absence of little Tomlinson, the master of the mansion. Unluckily, too, he was exceedingly hungry,—the meal thus hastily and extemporaneously administered did not please his palate,—he was bored to death by having nothing to do,—and the evening had already set in before the coachman reported his horses to be in a fit condition for commencing their return home. Had it not been the full moon, Brown, who was exceedingly averse from running any unnecessary risks, would have preferred sleeping at the first decent inn they

might encounter; but, emboldened by the lightness of the night, and being moreover assured that the return by the direct road would hardly exceed thirteen miles, he gave most minute instructions to the coachman, and the carriage at length drove off.

There is no contending against fate: the journey was doomed to be disastrous in its end, as it had been inauspicious in its commencement. Owing to his deafness, the coachman misapprehended his instructions, again took a wrong road, and, in turning the carriage round to repair his error, upset it in a ditch concealed by shrubs and brambles. Quickly climbing to the upper side of the vehicle, John opened the door and helped his master to alight, pronouncing, in an interrogative tone, the single word "hurt?"

"Not in the least," was the reply: "that stupid fellow must have practised over-turning carriages,—taken lessons in the art,—or he never could have done it so gently. I hope he has not broken more than three or four of his own bones."

"Who could have ever guessed of this

here kiver'd ditch?" growled the coachman, struggling out of the bushes into which he had been thrown.

"Who could ever dream that I should be such a fool as to live in the country?" cried his master peevishly. "No dykes or ditches in London, except Fleet Ditch, and that's covered over—but not made into a trap with briars and leaves. Better live among the savages. Much better roads in Otaheite:—never hear of a carriage being upset in the deserts of Arabia. No house near us, of course, and the night has set in. Pleasant!" John pointed to the full moon, which just then became visible above the trees. "Ay, ay, I see, John: but what's the use of that? She always waits till your carriage is upset, then pokes her lantern in your face to show you the mischief—makes a point of it in the country—never knew her act otherwise."

John, in the meanwhile, who had been surveying the position of the carriage with a view to its extrication, made a sign to the coachman to assist him in endeavouring to raise it, but, finding all his efforts ineffectual,

he gave up the attempt, wiped his forehead, and walked off, simply saying,—“Get some one to help us.”

“What! and leave me here to kick my heels in the mud with this deaf old haddock of a coachman?” exclaimed Brown. “If I knew anybody in the three kingdoms who would be idiot enough to engage him, I would send him about his business to-morrow morning.” So saying, he trudged briskly after John, whom he presently overtook, when they walked on in silence two or three hundred yards, until a turning of the road disclosed to them a large old-fashioned house, standing close to the foot-path along which they were proceeding.

“Quite a respectable-looking residence,” said Brown, well pleased with the discovery; “and though the lower shutters are closed, the inhabitants can’t be gone to bed. “What had we better do?”—John returned a practical answer by raising the heavy knocker, and giving three loud raps, which elicited no other response than their own dreary echoes sounding long and hollowly through

the building, and then dying away into deep silence. Brown repeated his previous question, to which his companion replied by repeating the three blows more heavily than before. Scarcely had the knocker fallen for the third time when a piercing shriek resounded through the whole interior of the building; the glass of a window immediately above their heads was shattered with a loud smash; two fair and beautifully formed naked arms, from whose lacerated flesh the blood streamed down upon them, were protruded through it, waving with a ghastly horror in the moonlight; and, after another heart-rending scream, a female voice cried out, "Help, help! Oh, save him, save him!"*

"Gracious God!" ejaculated Brown, shuddering, as he started aside to avoid the blood, though the arms were suddenly withdrawn: "what is the meaning of this? They are

* The ingenious author of 'Traits of Travel' (see vol. i. page 155 of that work) must excuse this resumption of an incident originally communicated to him by the present writer, on the authority of one who actually witnessed its occurrence.

perpetrating some horrid deed of villany within these walls, and we must try and scare the ruffians from their purpose. What, ho! hilloa! within there! open the door!" As he thus shouted out, raising his powerful voice to its loudest pitch, John renewed his knockings with an increased and incessant energy, but without effect; the mingled din died away as before in sepulchral echoes; a deep silence succeeded; and though they listened with breathless anxiety, they could not catch the sound of a footfall, nor any evidence of persons moving about, however stealthily, in the interior of the building.

Both were unarmed; and the sight and sounds we have described, proceeding from a lone house, might well have unnerved the stoutest heart; but John was absolutely insensible to fear, and, though Brown, as we have already intimated, was shy of unnecessary peril, he was not only a resolute man, but, where he suspected the perpetration of any cruelty or outrage, his indignation, and his eager desire to interfere and prevent it, made him a reckless one. Trotman's

quick eye having detected a dilapidation in the wall that flanked the premises, he clambered over it, followed by his master, when they found themselves in a neglected garden, overgrown with rank vegetation. The shutter of one of the side windows was unfastened, the sash was up, and by the moonlight streaming through an open door opposite they could perceive that the room was large, old-fashioned, and unfurnished.

Seeming to think that he might claim precedence in this adventure without any disrespect to his master, John got in without noise, Brown did the same, they crossed the chamber and walked to the foot of a broad antique staircase, surmounted by a skylight. Both were silent, and both trod gently, as if they felt the prudence of stealing cautiously forward, where they might possibly be assailed by numerous desperadoes; but the creaking of the crazy stairs, reverberating in the hollow space, prated ominously of their whereabouts, and accelerated the pulsation of Brown's heart, even while it urged him onward with a sterner resolu-

tion. On reaching the landing-place, John pointed to a door that stood ajar, with a significant look, which said, “ *That* must be the chamber ;” and at this instant they heard a low moaning sound from within, followed by the words—“ It is *his* blood ! it is *his* blood !” muttered in a shuddering sort of whisper, which occasioned Brown to grasp his cane with a convulsive energy. John pushed open the door, and they entered a spacious unfurnished room, at the further extremity of which, beside the broken window, and in the full glare of the moonlight, they beheld a female figure seated on the floor, repeating the words they had just heard, and moaning piteously as she gazed at her own bleeding arms.

“ Poor dear creature !” exclaimed Brown, hastening up to her : “ Heaven help us all ! what a pitiful sight is this ! Who are you ? what are you ? how came you in this unfurnished house ?—You cried out Save *him* : to whom did you allude ? Is any one with you ? Were you seeking to escape, or have you cut yourself thus shockingly by acci-

dent?" Of these and other interrogatories put to her in rapid succession, she took no other notice than by reiterating the words, "It is *his* blood," followed by incoherent mutterings, and a wild vacant look, which manifestly declared her to be of unsound mind. "*Whose* blood?" demanded Brown. She glanced her eyes searchingly round the room, and only replied by a mournful shake of the head. John, in the mean while, without the loss of a single instant, hastily untied his neckcloth, tore it into strips, carefully examined her arms, and, having ascertained that they contained no portion of the broken glass, he bound up her wounds, which proved to be much less extensive than the effusion of blood had at first led them to fear. Having successfully accomplished this object, he whispered in his master's ear the word "mad," at the same time pointing to the full moon.

"Ay, ay; I see, I see," was the low-voiced reply. "Frightened perhaps by our knockings and shoutings, and under the influence of the full moon, the poor creature

must have dashed her arms through the window, without knowing what she was about." John gave a nod, adding the words, "A lady," affirmatively.

"Evidently;" said his master, "and fair, and young, and delicate, and pretty too. Poor thing! poor thing! Whence on earth can she have come, and how can she have found her way to this empty and unfurnished house?"

"Married! again whispered his companion, pointing to a wedding-ring upon her finger.

"Adzooks! and so she is, I do protest. Ah! that's the secret, no doubt, of all her misfortunes. Same thing everywhere—go where you will—marriage at the bottom of all the mischief and misery. What fools people are! Well, thank God! *I* was never such an ass:—ha! ha!" He raised his cane, and was about to give the customary thumps, when, suddenly recollecting that it might startle or annoy the sufferer, he lowered it softly to the ground, for, spite of all his occasional roughness and petulance,

Adam Brown had a gentle and a tender heart. "Why, John," he continued, "you are quite a surgeon; you have managed capitally: but what, in Heaven's name, are we to do with the poor lady?"

"Get coach-horse—ride for assistance," replied John, disappearing from the room almost as soon as the words were out of his mouth, and leaving his master in no small tribulation of mind. "Here's a pretty situation for a fellow to be placed in!" was his lugubrious exclamation, as he walked rapidly up and down the room from nervous excitement. "This is the infernal peace and happiness and security of a country life! Carriage upset in a ditch, coachman gone one way, footman another, and here am I, boxed up at night with a madwoman, in a lone unfurnished house. Shouldn't wonder if she were to bite me—both mad then—perhaps fight one another, like the two cats in the garret, until nothing left of either but a little bit of flue. Suppose the police were to find me here. Might be accused of having wounded her—taken up for a murderer if she dies. Swear away my

life—shouldn't be surprised, not in the least: such things common where all is rural innocence and simplicity! It would be only winding up the luck of the day."

These gloomy forebodings were soon dispelled; for when Trotman, running at full speed, reached the scene of the accident, he found that the coachman, with the assistance of some passing waggoners, had raised the carriage and drawn it from the ditch, undamaged, except by a few scratches, so that it was driven up to the door of the lone house, just as the grumbling merchant, following out the consequences of his soliloquy, imagined himself to be listening to his own last dying speech and confession. Delighted at being thus reprieved, as it were, at the foot of the gallows, he rubbed his hands gleefully, and told John that he had determined to take the poor lunatic lady to the Manor-House, and to keep her there until he could discover and restore her to her friends,—an announcement which was received with a nod of approbation.

"Hallo! what can be the meaning of this?" cried Brown, as he gently raised her

from the floor in his arms : “ her clothes are wringing wet, and yet we have not had a drop of rain.”

“ The Severn ! ” ejaculated John significantly, pointing at the same time to some fragments of river-weeds still adhering to her dress.

“ Hey ? how ? Do you think, then, that the unhappy lady may have fallen into the river, or perhaps have thrown—— ” He paused, and John nodded, as he placed one of her wounded arms most carefully upon his own : his master did the same on the other side : and the object of their joint solicitude, who was now silent and perfectly passive, suffered herself to be led down-stairs, to be helped out of the window and over the wall, by which she had doubtless gained admittance into the house, and finally to be placed in the carriage. Brown seated himself beside her, Trotman mounted behind, the coachman drove off, and they reached the Manor-House without further accident, though not until a late hour.

CHAPTER II.

TRIALS and burthens are not to be measured by their actual weight, but by the powers and habits of those who are to endure them ; and, thus tested, few will wonder that Allan Latimer's annoyances and disappointments, young and inexperienced as he was, should have plunged him into a state of great mental distress. Not only had his fond illusion with reference to Ellen been suddenly and painfully dispelled, but his feelings in every direction had been sorely wrung. To part thus suddenly, and for a period of which he saw not the termination, from the mother to whom he was so devotedly attached, and whom he had never hitherto quitted ; from the brother whom he loved so dearly ; from Adam Brown, whose friendship he had so many motives for culti-

vating, and whose disapproval of his flight had been so energetically expressed; from Woodcote, in which he had passed so many happy years; and to go forth upon the wide world, friendless and alone, without even any definite plan as to whither he should turn, or how he should employ himself—the violent severing of all these ties was like tearing his heart up by the roots. There was hope, indeed, at the bottom of the Pandora's box, now opening before him, for he trusted that his voluntary exile might tend to prosper the fortunes and the loves of Ellen and Walter; but this wish, sweet and gratifying as it was, did not prevent the tears from gathering in his eyes, as he sat on the top of the London coach, almost unconscious whither he was wending, and too deeply immersed in his own sad thoughts to pay the least attention to his fellow-passengers.

Sometimes, while perusing plays or novels of which the scene was laid in London, he had felt a wish to visit the mighty metropolis, to inspect its time-hallowed and story-fraught public buildings, to gaze upon its

magnificence, to mingle with its countless population, to enjoy for a short time its unrivalled shows and gaieties : but now that he was on the point of realising all that he had desired, his glittering aspirations faded altogether from his mind, and his thoughts reverted with a regretful yearning to the loved home from which he was flying, and where the current of his life had hitherto flowed on with such unvaried serenity and peace. Everything now recalled to him that happy home, the villages that he passed being only noticed that they might reflect back to him some feature of Woodcote. Every cottage that resembled his mother's, every green, or brook, or clump of trees, that bore the smallest likeness to similar objects in the vicinity of his abode, served but to increase his sadness ; even the odours that were wafted from the fields or gardens were unrefreshing to his imagination, for they reminded him of the many delightful walks he had taken with his mother, or Ellen, or Walter, through scented bean-fields or by May-flower hedges—walks rendered still

sweeter by that dear companionship—walks which perchance might never be resumed !

From this mournful reverie he was not awakened until they had completed nearly half their journey, when his attention was aroused by the somewhat singular appearance of a man who mounted the coach while the horses were being changed, and sat down beside him. Wrapped up in a large loose cloak, which concealed the whole upper portion of his form, his eyes encased in green goggles, while his throat and mouth were enveloped in a black respirator, such as is worn by persons of weak lungs, it was not easy to form a notion either of his general cast of countenance or of his age ; but so far as an opinion might be risked from the contour of his form and the visible portion of his face, an observer would have guessed him to be young, and by no means uncomely. Concluding him to be an invalid, Allan, somewhat ashamed of the churlish silence he had hitherto maintained towards his fellow-travellers, expressed a hope that he experienced no inconvenience from the

cold wind then blowing in their faces, adding that, if he were subject to any pectoral complaint, it might have been more prudent to travel inside.

"I thank you," replied the stranger, with a courteous bow, in a gentle voice, "but I am more incommoded by the confined air inside a coach than by the free atmosphere without, however sharp it may be, and you see I am well guarded against its attacks."

"I believe," resumed Allan, "that Cheltenham, and its vicinity, which I have just left, are considered very favourable for persons affected by pulmonary ailments. A friend of mine, who used to suffer much from asthma, finds himself considerably better since he came to reside under the Cotswold Hills, at a place called Woodcote."

"Woodcote!" ejaculated the stranger.

"Yes, you may possibly have heard of him; his name is Adam Brown."

"Adam Brown!" echoed the man, reddening suddenly, and fidgiting in his seat.

"Yes; do you know him?"

"Not I: how should I know him? Who

is he? what is he?—where is Woodcote? I never heard of it. Never heard of him.” His auditor was struck by the agitated manner and husky tone in which this was spoken, so different from the placid blandness of his previous demeanour; but, attributing it to the irritability of an invalid, he endeavoured to continue the conversation by some commonplace remarks on the scenery. His companion, however, made no reply, and, as the stage again moved on, he closed his eyes, nodded his head, and fell or appeared to fall into a deep sleep, so that Allan relapsed into silence and melancholy thoughts for another ten or twelve miles, when the stage again stopped to change horses, drawing up under a sign suspended over the middle of the road.

It chanced that, at this moment, a workman, bestriding the cross pole whence it hung, was securing it by an additional nail, for it had received some damage, when the noise of his hammer, arousing the stranger from his slumber, occasioned him to look suddenly up and to fix his eyes upon the carpenter for

nearly half a minute, during which brief interval he drew the lower part of his face out of the respirator. At this moment Allan observed that he had a deep scar on the left side of his cheek,—a circumstance which he would probably have forgotten as soon as he had noticed it had he not recollected that Chubbs had described the mysterious monk as having an exactly similar mark. Coupling this fact with his evident emotion at the mention of Woodcote, he could not help fixing his eyes upon him with an eager and a penetrating look, which was no sooner detected by his fellow-traveller than he replaced the respirator in evident confusion, and changed his position to the back of the roof, merely saying that he was afraid to face the cold wind any longer. .

This movement rather tending to confirm Allan's suspicions, he felt strongly tempted to sound him by making some allusion to Chubbs and his cart, but in his present position it was not easy to hold a parley with him, and, had it been practicable, he began to doubt after a little consideration,

whether it would be justifiable. Chubbs had not spoken very positively as to this supposed cicatrice; even if he were correct in describing it, other men might be similarly marked; and he felt that he had no right to cross-question a fellow-traveller thus casually encountered, still less to presume that he had been engaged in a night adventure of so mysterious, not to say so disreputable, a character. Besides, the person they had seen in a monastic dress was represented, both by Chubbs and Brown, as old and bald-headed, whereas the individual who had just left his side was apparently young, and wore a bushy head of hair. As he was evidently, however, anxious to conceal himself, Allan, in spite of these discrepancies, continued to associate him with the runaway monk, and determined to keep his eye upon him during the remainder of the journey, in the hope that something might occur before they reached London to confirm or rebut his suspicions. Great, therefore, was his mortification on finding, when they again stopped, that he had left the coach, having got down,

as it appeared, at the foot of the last hill and struck immediately into a cross-road. The coachman stated, when questioned on the subject, that he had never seen the gentleman before; that he had no luggage whatever, not even a carpet-bag; and that he had paid his fare to London. It was evident, then, that he had intended to proceed thither—a design which he would appear to have abandoned on account of the accidental exposure of his chin to the scrutiny of his fellow-traveller. Such, at least, was Allan's conjecture, which, whether well founded or not, furnished him with abundant materials for surmise and suspicion, and thus helped to withdraw his thoughts from the consideration of his own grievances.

Other considerations, suggested by the novel character of the objects surrounding him, tended to divert his attention, for he was now approaching the mighty metropolis of which he had heard, and read, and thought so much, but which had hitherto presented itself to his imagination as the dim and mysterious phantasm of a province covered

with houses, churches, and palaces, rather than as a reality which was ever to be subjected to his waking senses. As yet its position was only signified by a distant and dense mass of vapours, whence the all-surmounting dome of St. Paul's heaved itself up into the air with a graceful majesty, or the gilded cross of some lofty spire would emerge for a moment in the shifting lights of a windy evening, again to be veiled in smoke-clouds, thus stimulating only to disappoint his curiosity.

Other and nearer changes attracted his notice as they proceeded. Handsomely appointed carriages of every description, bearing back the rich citizens to their country houses, passed them in quick succession; while the detached villas on either side the road, attesting in every detail the wealth of their occupants, exhibited an air of pretension and a class character of their own. Projecting porticoes, plaster pilasters, and ornamental entablatures of stucco, crowning the narrow wings, affected some claim to architectural design; the plate-glass win-

dows, planted drive, flaunting flower-garden, and well-fenced paddock, wherein pastured two or three Alderney cows, or the eldest son's best hackney, dignified with the name of a hunter, showed that the citizen who could afford to live eight or ten miles out of town assumed in some little degree the character of a country gentleman.

As the travellers drew nearer to London, these villas were planted closer to each other, in narrower slips of ground, until at length they could only maintain their independence and isolation from their neighbours by a side doorway and a hall of a few feet diameter. This distinctive dignity shortly disappeared; the squeezed compact tenements assumed the form of streets, though a slip of front garden, planted with dingy poplars and sickly flowers, struggled by a few faint remnants of expiring rurality to preserve the neighbourhood from absolute Londonism. Again, as they whirled along, another change became manifest in the style of the suburban buildings. Smaller, meaner, dirtier, and still more densely wedged, the houses were

brought close up to the foot-pavement for the convenience of the shops, and the narrow slip of garden, transferred to the back of the building, being used for drying linen, or for the purposes of trade, though even here a little patch of sooty green, or a few flower-pots, showed an unwillingness to allow the lingering smiles of nature to be altogether obliterated.

While noticing these successive mutations, Allan was struck by the busy throngs of people, the endless varieties of vehicles passing and re-passing, the ceaseless noises of wheels, and the clamour of the various cries—a grating dissonance which increased to a stunning bewilderment when the stage rattled over the paved stones, amid the whole clattering turmoil, and bustle, and hubbub of multitudinous London. A stoppage of some continuance upon Westminster Bridge, where the carriages were blocked up in an immovable mass, while the stream of passengers on either side flowed on without interruption, actually startled him by its strange silence, enabling him at the same time to sur-

vey the novel scene around him with a more leisurely and collected observation. A few yards in advance of the stage-coach stood a funeral procession, with its sable plumes, returning from a burial in the country ;—from the deck of a steam-vessel, as it churned its foaming way through the waves beneath, sprang suddenly up the sound of jocund music, to the accompaniment of which a crew of male and female revellers were dancing merrily on the deck ;—at a little distance were seen two boats dragging for the body of a female who had committed suicide by throwing herself from the bridge a few hours before ; while both upon the land and water the mingled struggle of business and pleasure, of life and death, was plied with an eagerness that seemed to blind each participator to every fate and every object but his own.

At this moment a rather appalling thought flitted athwart the mind of Allan. What if the bridge, unable to support the accumulated masses above, were to be precipitated upon the boats below ! Such an idea, in all

probability, had not occurred to a single other individual of the whole crowd. Use and daily transit had driven away all thought of danger : besides, when an accommodation of any sort has long continued, we think that it has no longer any right, scarcely indeed any power, to cease. But this was the first time that Allan had crossed so great a bridge, or seen so vast an assemblage.

On his left were the Houses of Parliament, with all their historical associations, and the venerable Abbey, beneath whose pavement reposed the silent dust which had composed the intellect and the vigour, the poetry, the science, the wisdom, and the valour of England, since first she had spread her arts and arms over the world, and had asserted her "proud pre-eminence of teaching the nations how to live." Turning his eyes in an opposite direction, he swept over the whole western expanse of the city, now glooming in the dim and congregated vapours of evening, and presenting few distinguishable objects but spires and domes, and an interminable succession of chimneys, each throw-

ing up the smoky veil which was shortly to fall upon its head and hide it for the night.

“And each of those chimneys,” thought Allan, for the houses were no longer visible, “communicates with family firesides, with gilded saloons or cobwebbed hovels, with parties assembled for weal or woe, but at all events for the enjoyment of social fellowship; and in all this outstretched mass of buildings, in all this mighty metropolis with its myriad of inhabitants, I am without a single friend,—I am alone. In the solitude of the country there is nothing oppressive, nothing withering! for if we are withdrawn from man, we are brought into nearer and sweeter communion with nature; but to be exiled from her, and all her soul-cheering charms and influences, to stand alone in the desert of a crowded city, without a single sympathising bosom—to be *in* the world and not *of* it—this, this is indeed solitude; it is more than isolation, it is the living death of the heart.”

So completely was he saddened and crushed by this feeling, that the increasing crowds as he advanced only deepened the

sense of his loneliness, and he closed his eyes in order to shut out the sight of fellow-creatures with whom he had no fellowship, until the coach arrived at the Regent Circus, when he stepped down upon the London pavement with a prostration of spirit such as he had never before experienced. Mechanically following the waiter into the coffee-room, he stood in the midst of it for two or three minutes, gazing vacantly at the new scene around him, and hardly yet reconciled to the startling fact that he, a stranger, forlorn, helpless, and alone, should actually be deposited in the centre of that huge arena wherein a million and a half of human beings were incessantly engaged in the great struggle for subsistence, for distinction, or advancement. Unexcited by ambitious hopes, and unsolicitous for wealth or fame, what business had he, an humble and unambitious man of the fields, in this fierce and whirling vortex, this metropolitan Maelstrom?

A waiter dispersed his reverie, and brought him back to the business which must be plied alike in town or country, by putting a

bill of fare in his hands, and asking what he would be pleased to have for dinner. "Whatever is ready," was the reply,—an answer which summoned him in two or three minutes to a small table and a joint, whose aspect, however inviting, could not tempt him to eat; for where the head and the heart are full of busy thoughts and sad feelings, the pleading even of an empty stomach will not always be regarded. To Allan, who had never been in a coffee-room before, there was something singularly unsocial and selfish in the eager haste with which his neighbours, each at his own little table, gobbled up his allotted portion, without taking notice of anybody or anything but the viands before him. Though he could not imitate their voracity in this respect, he was so far influenced by the example of his immediate neighbours as to call for a tumbler of warm negus and some biscuits, which he had just concluded when the waiter brought him a newspaper, concluding that its perusal would induce him to order a fresh supply of the beverage. His eye fell

listlessly upon the columns, but his thoughts were at Woodcote with his mother, with Ellen, with Walter; with all that he loved upon earth, and all now far, far away from him. As he evinced no disposition to order a replenishment of the tumbler, the waiter informed him that a gentleman would be glad of the paper as soon as it was out of hand,—an application which occasioned an immediate surrender of the broad sheet, and recalled his wandering thoughts.

He had intimated his intention of sleeping at the hotel, and, as he found the time beginning to hang heavy upon his hands, he resolved to gratify his curiosity by taking a short stroll in the immediate vicinity. Having arrived just at the hour of dusk, ere the shops were fully lighted, he was dazzled and amazed, when, upon turning into the Quadrant, he found himself surrounded by a blaze of splendour from the gas-illuminated windows and lamps, eclipsing even the rays of the full moon, which were thrown slantingly through the inter-columnar spaces, only to fade before the glare of artificial light.

The beauty, the magnificence, the singularity of that double colonnade ; the apparently interminable extent imparted to it by its winding course ; the brightness of meridian day, when he had expected to step forth into the gloomy night ; the variety and brilliance of the shops ; the crowds of jostling pedestrians ; the throng of whirling carriages in the serpentine street, seemed to his astonished senses an enchantment, a dream, that had conjured up some gorgeous scene out of the ' Arabian Nights,' or rather some vision of architectural grandeur, from the classic soil of Athens or Rome. Lost in ever-increasing admiration, he paced the Quadrant, on both sides, for upwards of an hour, when he returned to his hotel, and shortly retired to rest, anticipating some fantastic dream of the wonders he had seen ; but he had scarcely laid his head upon the pillow when all vanished, and his brooding thoughts recurred—not without a feeling of self-reproach at their temporary alienation—to Woodcote, to his mother, to Ellen, to Walter.

Though his impetuous feelings had hur-

ried him thus suddenly away from home, he had not been so entirely absorbed by them as not to have formed some plan, however vague and shadowy, as to his destination and employment in London. Determined not to withdraw one shilling from the narrow income of his family, already barely sufficient for his mother's comfort, he resolved to apply to a distant relation of the name of Lum, a house-agent and auctioneer, residing in Bloomsbury, and to solicit his aid in procuring for him some employment which might suffice to maintain him, until circumstances should allow his return to Woodcote. With this person the Latimers had held no communication for several years, but he was remembered among them as a kind-hearted thriving man of business, with a good many connections in the city, so that Allan deemed him the most likely person to promote his present views, at all events by his advice, if he could not immediately obtain for him a situation. What this might be, provided only that it were honourable, he cared not, for he had no false

pride that he would suffer to interfere with the honest pride of independence.

Having studied a map of London until he had made himself master, as he thought, of the direct route to Bloomsbury, he sallied forth at an early hour of the following morning, again turning into the Quadrant, and again involuntarily stopping to admire its singular beauty, as well as the motley character of the people passing and repassing, who were already numerous. Spruce dapper clerks hurrying to the public offices, substantial shopkeepers walking from their westward or suburban residences, tradeswomen with their baskets and bundles, early Jews, and hawkers, all with eager business-like faces, afforded a strange contrast to a set of loungers, lodgers in the Quadrant or its immediate vicinity, dark, untoiletted, moustached, and bewhiskered men, mostly belonging to the Opera, the theatre, or gaming-houses, who sauntered out in slippers to smoke a cigar and while away half an hour before breakfast, or to gaze listlessly at the uninterrupted succession of

omnibuses and other vehicles which were conveying a whole mercantile and trading population into the eastern quarters of the metropolis.

While thus occupied, Allan heard a sharp high-pitched voice ejaculate, "*Vinti mille diavoli!* three-fourths, three-fourths! *Cospetto!* what a Jew!"—The oath and the peculiar voice were familiar to his ear; he looked round, and beheld a little old man in rather shabby black, with an aquiline nose and a large dark eager eye, carrying his left arm in a sling, while the other leaned upon an umbrella as he paused for a moment in apparent communion with his own impatient thoughts. "Signor Crevetti," exclaimed Allan, "I am delighted to see you. Who would have thought that we should thus meet in London?" Instantly dropping his right hand over the gold seals of his watch with an assumed air of nonchalance, but with an evident intention to protect those appendages, the Italian peered up in the face of his interrogator, wearing a look of searching though silent suspicion.

“No wonder you have forgotten me,” said Allan; “it is some time since we met, and yet I saw you often enough when I went over to Cheltenham to take lessons of you on the violoncello. You then used to say that Allan Latimer was the most promising of all your pupils.”

“Allan Latimer? *Maraviglioso!* So it is! Ah, you played beautiful, beautiful.” And so saying, he tucked the umbrella under his arm, and shook his pupil’s hand with a real cordiality which he would not have lavished on any but a good performer on his favourite instrument. Taking Allan’s arm, and leading him along the Colonnade, the old Italian questioned him as to the cause of his visiting London, and soon obtained from his companion, who was naturally frank and unreserved, the full particulars of his little history, at the conclusion of which he again stopped, and inquired, with an anxious look, whether he had continued his practice of the violoncello.

“Continued!” exclaimed Allan; “I have done little else: it has become a passion with

me, and I have been sometimes blamed for throwing away so much time upon it."

"Throw away, throw away!" cried the Italian with an indignant gesture. "What do the fools suppose time was made for? And you play better—*molto meglio*—than when we parted?"

"I think you will say so."

"*Bene, bene!* and you will let me hear you. Stay—stay—*aspettate un poco*. Can you come now to my lodgings?—just by—quite *vicino*."—Allan having given a willing assent, they turned into Swallow-street, were admitted by a dirty-looking maid-servant into a narrow door beside a handsome shop, and climbed up three pair of stairs, when the Italian took a key from his pocket, and inducted his companion into a well-furnished apartment of good dimensions, though the atmosphere, suffused with the mingled odours of coffee and snuff, smelt close and unwholesome. "I never open my window," said Crevetti, who seemed to be aware of this little peculiarity, "because the fog and the damp air he spoil the string—in one *cinque*,

one five minute, down he go, one half-note below concert pitch." This must have been an object worth consideration, there being two violoncellos in the room, besides a huge bass in the corner, and several violins dispersed about. "*Via! scolaio mio,*" cried the master—"There is my own violoncello, the best in all England,—all but two and three others: he is tuned this morning; what shall you play?" Allan's eye fell upon some manuscript music on a stand: it was the tender, the mournful, the pathetic passage from the 'Sonnambula,' the *Tutto e sciolto*—the very piece which he had lately been practising with the greatest assiduity, because it had appealed the most touchingly to his feelings. "Anything you like," replied Allan, with the excusable vanity of wishing to surprise his old master.

"*Bene, bene!* he is beautiful," replied Crevetti, pointing to the score, seating himself where he could best observe the handling of the instrument, and taking a previous pinch of snuff that he might not interrupt the performance. After repeated and most

energetic cries of "*Bravo! bravissimo!*" accompanied by vehement gesticulation and amazed upliftings of the shaggy grey eyebrows, Crevetti, when his pupil had concluded, started from his seat, threw his right arm around him, hugged him, kissed his cheek, and then almost danced around him, ejaculating, amid mingled bursts of English and Italian, that he actually wanted words to express his amazement,—an averment which was perhaps meant as an excuse for his almost convulsive demonstrations of delight. "My dear Sir," he at length exclaimed in a tone of profound respect, for he no longer looked upon him in the familiar light of a pupil—"my dear Sir, I am *tutto stupefatto*: you beat your old master all to a nothing—all the world beat him now. *Ecco!* look here:" and he drew his bandaged hand from its sling. "One two days ago, the lid of a heavy piano fall on him, a hook tear him,—there come a—how you call him?—a *postema*,—an imposthume;—and here I am, lame of all my fingers for a *quindici*, for a fortnight,—perhaps for as much more."

"This is unfortunate," said Allan, "for of course it prevents you playing."

"*Totalmente*. I cannot give my lessons; I cannot play at the Opera,—*benché*, I am one of the band. *Ben bene*, when I met you, I had just seen Carlini: ah! he is a *furbo*, quite a *misero*, that old fellow. I showed him my hand, and said, 'What shall I pay you to give my lessons till I am well of this *maledetto affare*?' And he told me, 'Three-fourths of what you charge.' *Vinti mille diavoli!* and the old Jew call himself my friend!"

"Not a very friendly offer, I must confess."

"*Ben bene*, this is what I say to you. *Ecco*, my dear Sir! You want to get a little money for a short time. You shall give my lessons for me. *Si, si!* you must not shake your head,—you are quite able. You shall give my lessons, and I will pay you one-half—*mezzo*,—you understand: how say you?"—Looking upon a musical performer or teacher of any sort as one of the most elevated characters of existence, it did not for a moment occur to Crevetti that his

young friend, although he had hitherto enjoyed a state of humble independence, would consider his proposition in any way derogatory. Nor did it so present itself to Allan, who, being free from any conventional prejudices of that nature, and determined not to encroach upon the narrow income of his family, accepted the offer, only stipulating that it should be immediately cancelled in case he should prove incompetent to the discharge of its duties. At Crevetti's suggestion, and for the convenience of both parties, he engaged a comfortable bed-room in the same house, agreeing to take his meals, as often as it might suit him, with the Italian, who generally dined at a French *restaurateur's* in the immediate neighbourhood, when he did not make a sausage and a couple of French rolls at home a substitute for that repast. His portmanteau was accordingly transferred to Swallow-street, and Allan Latimer found himself, although he could hardly credit the reality of so sudden a change, an inhabitant of London.

CHAPTER III.

SCARCELY had he been installed in his new apartment when Crevetti, who had disappeared for half an hour, bustled back into the room, forcing half a pinch of snuff up his hook nose, and distributing the remainder over the floor, while he shrilly ejaculated—" *Via!* my young friend—for I call you now my scholar no more—*fortunatamente*, I found her just come down, just going to breakfast; and she say to me—*Cielo!* how she is always *amabile!*—let your friend come at one o'clock, *ad un' ora*, and he shall accompany me."

"Of whom are you talking?" demanded Allan.

"*Come?* did I not tell you? Of Signora Guardia. You know her, of course?"

"No, indeed; I never heard of the lady."

“*E possibile?* is he possible?” ejaculated the Italian, while his eyebrows, uplifted in wonder, drove a succession of wrinkles up his brown forehead, like the wave-worn ripples upon the sands of the sea-shore. “Not heard of the *cantatrice*, the famous contralto singer? *bellissima voce!*—*Ebbene*, I was to accompany her on the violoncello at a grand concert, where the Guardia is to sing Donizetti’s aria,—oh! he is beautiful!—out of the ‘Torquato Tasso,’—*Io l’udia nei suoi bei carmi*. You recollect him?—*Si, si*, you play him to me at Cheltenham.”

“I know it well; I have lately been practising the accompaniment.”

“*Per buona ventura*,—good, good! *Ecco*, you shall rehearse him this morning with the Guardia; and if she is content with your play, you shall accompany her at the concert: *che dite?* Ah, she will like you, *molto, molto!*”

“If you think I am equal to it.”

“Bah! you shall have no fear: set you to work in *questo punto*,—now; directly. There is the score; *via!* I will sit here and listen

to you. Wait you till I take my snuff."—The passage, as Allan had stated, being quite familiar to him, the bravos and delight of his auditors were not less exuberant and noisy than on his previous performance; but as some trifling amendments were suggested, it was played a second and a third time, until the critic, who was so devoted to music that he could hear the same piece ten times repeated, provided the execution were of a high order, at length pronounced it to be faultless.

"Have you a servant here who can carry the violoncello round to the Signora's?" demanded Allan, as the time drew near for their appointment.

"*Si, si,*" replied the Italian—"the best servant in the world—*io medesimo*. How says your proverb? He is a bad horse that will not carry his own—how you call it? *Bene*, he is my provender, and I shall carry him like a good horse. *Cospetto!* I should be an ass to pay just for to carry him round the corner." With these words he encased his favourite violoncello in a green bag,

performing that operation as carefully as if it had been a delicate child ; and had it indeed been his own flesh and blood, he could scarcely have appeared to love it more tenderly. Allan made some joking allusion of this nature, when the old man kissed the instrument with great emotion, exclaiming—" *Ebbene!* he is my child, my only child ; and when he keeps in good tune and I am well content of my play, I always kiss him and tell him ' You have been a good boy.' He was once the *favorito* of Dragonetti, but he never love him as I do." So saying, he placed his darling under his arm, and bore his burden carefully along the Quadrant, until they reached the door of the Signora's residence, which was opened by an old grey-headed and grey-suited Italian, who began instantly chatting with Crevetti in his own language. No sooner however had his eye fallen upon Allan than he started with an expression of some surprise, and, after again peering at his features, slowly but emphatically muttered

a few words to himself, whereof the import was not to be distinguished.

The drawing-room into which the visitants were ushered was of handsome dimensions and appearance, looking out upon the top of the colonnade, which, instead of being pierced with a sky-light, as in most of the adjoining houses, presented the level surface of a little garden, ornamented with evergreens, shrubs, and exotic flowers. In the apartment, which at the moment of their arrival was unoccupied, might be observed the usual profusion of furniture and trinketry, scattered about with the air of disorderly *nonchalance* prescribed by fashion ; but the whole was fresh and neatly kept. Music scores of various operas were heaped confusedly on the grand piano ; a superb Persian robe, intended to be worn at the next opera performance, reposed upon the back of a handsome *fauteuil* ; musical boxes, and Italian as well as English books, littered the tables ; a beautiful though small figure of Psyche stood on a con-

sole; and the room was suffused with the odour of a tuberose planted in a handsome china vase, by the side of which hung a canary-bird in a gilt cage. While Allan made these observations, his companion had been gingerly withdrawing the violoncello from its case, and arranging the music-stand,—operations which he had just concluded when a side-door opened, and the Signora hurried in, apologising to Crevetti, with a singularly gracious expression and melodious voice, for having kept him waiting.

Isola Guardia, for such was the name of the fair vocalist, appeared to be about twenty years of age, though she possessed so much mutability both of form and feature, that in her varying moods she might be supposed some years older or younger. Her lustrous hair, of the raven's purplish black, braided close to her face, displayed to advantage the fine and classical shape of her head,—a beauty seldom appreciated as it ought to be. Her large bright hazel eyes, fringed with long lashes,

surmounted by finely arched distinctly marked brows, and an expansive forehead, imparted to the upper portion of her face a character of the finest Italian order, lofty, commanding, and beautifully statuesque ; while the lower half participated somewhat of the Spanish type, the lips being rich and full, and the cheeks dimpled, as was also the round and rather short chin ; thus presenting an appearance that might have been deemed voluptuous, had not her countenance been chastened by an expression of perfect though gracious modesty. No fixed colour was visible in her dark clear complexion, but its place was well supplied by the changeful hues, the thousand blushing apparitions, which chased each other over her features, according to the varying emotions of her mind. From the perfect symmetry of her form, her stature, which was rather above than below the middle height, appeared less than it really was ; but even with reference to her figure, so different were the aspects she could make it assume, that a spectator might have found it difficult to pronounce

whether the majestic dignity of the Roman girl, or the supple gracefulness of the Andalusian, were most conspicuous in her carriage and *tournure*.

In her cordial welcome of Crevetti, she had not immediately perceived Allan; but no sooner had her looks rested upon him than she started as the servant had done, stopped suddenly in her approach, and, with wide-opened eyes, elevated brows, and a mouth just sufficiently unclosed to reveal her pearly teeth, remained gazing for an instant in evident amazement, after which she ejaculated in perfect English—"Good Heavens! never, no never did I see such a likeness. I beg your pardon," she continued, gracefully curtsying and pointing to a chair, for Allan remained standing—"but you bear so striking a resemblance to a near and dear relation whom I have left in Italy, that I could almost have imagined it to be himself. *Ohimè*—there is no such happiness. Yes, you are the very image of Camillo."

"Is it a brother whom I have the good

fortune so closely to resemble?" asked Allan.

"Excuse my rudeness in again gazing at you," resumed Isola—"No, I shall never be able to call you anything but Camillo."

"I shall be only too proud to answer to that name, and to deem myself indeed your brother, if I may be so far honoured."

"Camillo! your sister holds you to that bargain," said the beautiful Italian, at the same time extending her hand with such a winning and affectionate, yet modest and blushing cordiality, that Allan could not refrain from pressing it respectfully to his lips.

"I dare say you think me very forward, considering this is our first interview," faltered Isola, withdrawing her hand in some little confusion; "but a brother and sister, you know—and besides, Crevetti will tell you that, though I am an odd girl, there is no harm in me."

"*Si, si, si,*" cried the old Italian, in the intervals of as many pinches of snuff; "*una fanciulla*—without a fault. Every way you

are as good as you sing charming: how can you then be more good? *Via!* let us begin. All is ready,—he is in good tune.”

“Stay, stay!” exclaimed Isola, ringing the bell. “I must first ask Antonio whether the likeness strikes him as forcibly as it does me. It will gratify the dear old man.” With the kindness which in Italy makes the servant one of the family, and which, by securing his respectful attachment, proves that familiarity does not always breed contempt, she fell into chat with Antonio, asking him in Italian whether her new visitant reminded him of any friend at Naples, in answer to which he immediately pronounced the word Camillo, and declared that he had no sooner opened the door than he had been struck by the likeness.

“Ah! I was sure of it—I was sure of it. Dear, dear Camillo!” exclaimed Isola, with a tender sigh: and then, dismissing Antonio, she apologised to Allan with the utmost suavity and grace for having detained him so long, and declared that she was ready to begin.

“ *Grazie a Dio !*” cried Crevetti. “ What signify brother and sister and likeness, and all that, when you might have something from the ‘Torquato Tasso’ of Donizetti?—so beautiful he is !”

Although this was only a rehearsal in her own apartment, Isola, not unwilling perhaps to make a favourable impression upon her new acquaintance, or possibly because the associations he had called up had deeply interested her feelings, threw her whole soul into the passage where she proclaims her readiness to resign both crown and kingdom, could she be thus assured of her lover’s truth. Standing up as she sang, and partially assuming the attitudes and expression appropriate to the character she represented, the queen-like dignity of her figure, which seemed to expand as she proceeded, the play of her most eloquent and beautiful features, the mellow richness of her contralto tones, presented a combination of charms which might have overpowered Allan, had not a great portion of his attention been necessarily confined to

his own book and his own performance. Enough, however, had been seen and heard to raise his admiration and delight to ecstasy; nor was this feeling diminished when the gifted songstress, addressing him as her brother Camillo, and protesting that she had never been better accompanied in her life, expressed her wish that he should supply the place of Signor Crevetti at the coming concert,—a proposition to which he gave an eager and delighted assent.

At Crevetti's request, he now played over again the *Tutto e sciolto* from the 'Son-nambula,' performing it with so much emotion and pathetic tenderness, under the inspiration of his own softened feelings and Isola's beaming eyes, that she exclaimed as he concluded, while her looks and tones attested that her words came from her heart—"Beautifully, exquisitely played indeed! Methought I could hear your instrument actually speak, or rather sigh, the words—'*il piu tristo dei mortali*;'—but, surely, surely, *you* can have no reason to call yourself unhappy."

"Not to-day, not to-day at all events, whatever I may have thought yesterday," replied Allan.

"And he was my pupil!" exclaimed Crevetti, drawing himself up and rubbing his hands triumphantly.

"And he *is* your master," laughed Isola.

"*Venti mille diavoli! si*—but for why? because I am *monco*—lame of my hand. *Ahi!* how he pain me!"

Although the beautiful Italian spoke with a foreign accent, which, however, only imparted a more pleasing piquancy to her dulcet tones, she possessed a perfect command of the language, for which she accounted to Allan, when he expressed his surprise at her fluency, by telling him that her mother had been an Englishwoman, married to an Italian singer at Naples, where both her parents died. The canary-bird, who had been silent during the playing and singing, now set up a loud and shrill piping, as if determined to drown the conversation since he could not take a share in it. "That is always his way," said Isola; "he will listen

all day to vocal or instrumental music, but it seems as if he could not endure talking."

"*Si*, and a very sensible bird too: conversation is all throw away time," cried Crevetti, "*tutto perduto!* my violoncello he talk much better than me."

"Granted," smiled Isola: "but the bird forgets that there are others in the room, so I must check his volubility." With these words she threw a black veil over the cage, which immediately silenced the little warbler, when she continued, with an altered tone and look, "And yet, poor little fellow! I cannot help sympathising with him, for our fates are nearly similar. An exile from his native land, his cage, though gilded and adorned, is only a prison, in which he is compelled to sing for his subsistence. Exposed to all the severities of an ungenial climate—Oh! how unlike his own sunny land!—he is not only doomed to struggle with the instinct of migration, but may perchance be pining for the mate from whom he has been severed. That, that is indeed a cruel trial."

Her voice softened as she spoke, her eyes assuming at the same time an expression of peculiar tenderness, which was presently succeeded by an indignant flash, as she resumed, "And then, when people are tired of the poor bird, or the poor *cantatrice*, they throw over their heads the dark veil of silence and oblivion. Our life is only a sound, our memory is only its faint echo."

"*Basta!*" cried Crevetti: "no more of this *dolente istoria*. I will not have you to be melancholic, though you are in England. I am never *tristo* while I can have my pinch of snuff and my violoncello. Ah, he is a darling!" Allan was about to make some reply to Isola's desponding observations, when the door opened, and Antonio, with a smile flickering over the grim mahogany of his features, like gold-leaf upon gingerbread, announced Mr. Tittup, a person usually designated in the purlieus of the minor theatres and the Opera House as little Tom Tittup.

Proud of his figure, which was in much better preservation than his face, his lower limbs

were accurately outlined by tight elastic pantaloons, succeeded by silk stockings, not particularly clean, and a pair of dress shoes; while his upper man was screwed into a swallow-tailed coat, so pinched at the waist, that, but for the concealed belt, the buttons must have dragged their anchors. For reasons rendered evident by the chinchilla stubble left behind, his whiskers had been cut off. A flaxen wig, incongruously young, made his sharp dry features appear additionally old; nor was this tendency lessened when it was viewed from behind, where truant patches of straight grey hair, escaping at the nape of his neck, contrasted strangely with the hyacinthine juvenility of his purchased curls. Clear as it was, from these and other symptoms, that Tom was a *ci-devant jeune homme*, he was still young enough to discharge with efficiency the manifold duties of his calling,—that of a subordinate dancer, singer, and actor of all-work at one of the minor theatres. On the nights when his talents were not thus put in requisition, he was

generally to be found at the Opera, if he could procure an order; failing in which, he usually indulged in a cigar and a tumbler of brandy and water at the Taglioni in Pantan Street.

Jerking himself into the room on the tips of his toes, he advanced towards Isola, cut a very creditable *entrechat*, sank down upon one knee, and said, or rather sang in a sort of burlesque recitative,

“Dear Signora, *bella Cantatrice!*

O listen to my prayer, I do beseech ye.”

Lending herself to his fantastic humour, the person thus addressed threw herself into a theatrical attitude, and recitivated in reply, with a mock gravity that gave a rich zest of ridicule to her trifling words—

“I cannot listen to you thus—so sit up,

And tell me your petition, Mister Tittup.”

“O peerless songstress of the heavenly choir! O Signora, such as was never seen before—a!” apostrophised the actor; “ne’er will I rise up from my knee until you grant my humble plea. What says Pope, the bard

of Twickenham, of the grotto, of the willow-tree? Saith he not that 'order is Heaven's first law'? And would you, beautifulissima,—have you the heart, O charmingissima, to prevent my enjoying the first law of Heaven?"

"In plain English," laughed Isola, "you want a gallery or a pit order for Saturday night. O most unreasonable Tittup! you promised not to apply to me again for a fortnight."

"Signora, you are truth itself; so much so, that you ought at this very moment to be lying at the bottom of a well. I did make you that promise,—the soft impeachment Tommy Tittup owns,—but I knew not then that *you* were to sing on Saturday; *you*, the muse of tuneful song, the Sappho of Leucadia's leap, the syren of the listening wave, the nightingalia of the warbling grove, whom if I hear not I shall die the death! Ah! those smiling eyes confirm my heart's best hope. You would not annihilate Tom Tittup.

"If you've no order for the pit, bestow
Two for the gallery, and let me go."

“I have a great mind to give you none, as a punishment for your insincerity. My singing, indeed! Confess, O recreant knight, thou lover of the light fantastic toe—confess that you go to the Opera for the sole delight of seeing your friend Harriet Hogg—I beg her pardon, I mean Mademoiselle La Hogue—perform *pirouettes* in the ballet.”

“O Signora, what a libel dire! Honour bright, as the stars shine by night! I go for the aria, the cavatina, the *preghiera*, the recitativo, and all the rest of that sort of thing-o. What! have you not heard that I am a vocalist and a composer, like yourself?”

“I have heard one of your *preghiere*,—that which prays for pit or gallery orders,—which you yourself have encored till I am weary of it.”

“Then will I sing you a bran new one, that shall make your delighted ears stand on end, like quills upon the fretful porcupine. Talk of the *Fra nembì crudeli*, from the ‘Briganti,’—of *Al mio pregar t’arrendi*, from ‘Otello,’—of the still more touching one from ‘Anna Bolena,’—what are they all

compared to the pathetic solemnity of mine ?
List, list, oh list, to mine, addressed to the
goddess of the light fantastic toe !—

“ Grant, O Terpsichore,
Goddess of kickery,
Entrechats, pirouettes, capers,
That when I shall play
In next Friday’s ballet,
My *pas seul* may be puff’d in the papers.”

These absurd words, sung to a ludicrous tune, with a still more ludicrous mimicry of operatic vehemence and gesticulation, occasioned Isola to burst into a peal of laughter, which, though silvery in sound, exhibited all the hearty and joyous abandonment of a child.

“ Really, Tittup,” she exclaimed, “ this is excellent foolery,—it is irresistible. I can refuse you nothing. Dancing, poetry, and song, all at once ! Truly you are the great Apollo of the minor theatres, and shall be crowned as you deserve.” With these words, she snatched a pit ticket from the mantelshelf, hummed a light air, to the accompaniment of which she danced twice round the kneel-

ing figure, with a grace and elegance that might well be termed the poetry of motion, while the radiant smiles chased each other over her face like sunbeams on the waves, and then, depositing the ticket upon his flaxen poll, and suddenly changing the expression of her features, she chanted in sonorous recitative,—

“For your light heart, light heels, light hair, light face,
This tribute on your lighter head I place.

And thus concludes the farce, and Mr. Tittup may rise from his kneeling posture,” she added in her natural voice, at the same time pointing to a chair. The actor of all-work arose in apparent obedience to the intimation, but, as he never lost an opportunity of displaying his agility, he first took his position behind the chair, placed his hands upon the back, vaulted over it into the seat, jumped thence to the ground, sat himself down, twiddled his thumbs rapidly round each other, and looked with a smirk of infinite self-satisfaction into the face of each of his companions, as much as to say, “There, what do think of that?”

“I should just like to know,” said the performer of this feat, after a short interval, during which he seemed to be waiting for the applause of the spectators—“I should just like to know, merely for curiosity—but I *should* just like to know which of our big-wigs at any of our great meetings can take the chair in that style. Will the Lord Mayor attempt it in the Egyptian Hall, or any of the Court of Aldermen, or the Speaker of the House of Commons, or the Lord Chancellor in the Upper House, or His Majesty (God bless him!) when he has to take the stone chair at the coronation? If they did, I should be particularly sorry to be the nose either of the Lord Mayor, or the Alderman, or the Speaker, or the Chancellor, or of His Majesty (God bless him!)—that’s all *I* say, for I think there’s very little doubt that they would fall flat upon it.”

Isola now made some bantering allusion to his flirtation with Mademoiselle La Hogue, which he received with an affected confusion, as if he disclaimed all pretension to the exclusive regards of that lady, and

then, having secured the great object of his visit, he started up, laid his hand upon his heart, flourished a bow of tender acknowledgment, followed by a demi-pirouette to Isola, kissed and waved both hands to Allan and Crevetti, and danced and *glissaded* out of the room. Scarcely a minute had elapsed from his disappearance when a slight scuffle was heard on the stairs, and an angry female voice, ejaculating, "Get along with you, you nasty old jackadandy!" which ob-jurgatory words were found to proceed from the housemaid, who had accidentally met Tittup on the stairs, when he protested that he was under the unavoidable necessity of kissing her, because she had the true La Hogue eyebrow. Conquering, however, the unavoidable necessity, the culprit had taken to flight the moment he heard the opening of the drawing-room door; and Isola was probably right when she gave it as her opinion that he had merely ventured upon this little escapade to procure the reputation of being as gallant and as gay a Lothario among the housemaids as he was reputed

to be, probably with equal reason, among the ballerinas of the Opera.

"I believe the poor fellow to be half-cracked," she added ; "but as he is a kind-hearted creature, always ready to do a good office for any of his brother performers, and as I am really amused with his fustian and rhodomontade, I suffer him to plague me for free admissions."

"*Si, si*, you are always kind, very kind, *molto*," cried Crevetti ; "but why talk you of his fair hair? *Cospetto!* he is a wig ; I know where he buy him. Why did you not quiz him, that fine curling wig?"

"Because I would not hurt poor Tittup's feelings,—and why should I? If you love your joke better than your friend, you will be very apt to lose your friend, which is no joke. I bantered him about La Hogue because I know he likes it. Every man of a certain age likes to be suspected of *affaires du cœur* ; and I might perhaps bring a similar accusation against you, did I not know that you will never be *cavaliere servente* to any one but your lady love with the four strings,—your violoncello."

"*Vero! vero!*" cried the old man, throwing his arm affectionately round the instrument; "he is my darling, *gioja mia*, my innamorata."

"Ah! you are admiring my Psyche!" cried Isola to Allan, who had only withdrawn his eyes from herself, because he feared that his fixed and ardent gaze might appear rude. "Is it not beautiful? It is the work and the gift of my dear, dear Camillo." Electrified as it appeared by the bare mention of this name, she ran up to the figure, and repeatedly kissed it. "Do not take me for a Pygmalion in petticoats," she continued, while a slight blush swept across her face like a flash of rose-light: "I love the gift, because it reminds me of the giver."

"Is your brother then a statuary?" demanded Allan.

"Who, Camillo? Yes, a young one, but I hope to see him a distinguished artist when he is older. Wherever I have been since I left Italy, this image accompanies me."

"It is exquisitely imagined, as well as sculptured; and you could not well have

selected a more appropriate companion in your travels, if it must be a statue, for I should imagine you, like Psyche, to be all soul."

"Only when I have this image in my thoughts—in my heart. You see Camillo has given her the wings of a butterfly. Metamorphosed from an earthworm to a tenant of the upper air, what a lucky symbol did that insect supply to the Greeks of the resurrection of the human body and the immortality of the soul! No wonder they sculptured it on their tombs."

"I know not a more beautiful fable, altogether, than that of Psyche."

"May we not rather call it an allegory? and perhaps the most ancient one in the world, for the Pagans seem to have borrowed it from higher and holier sources than any that their own mythology could supply. To me at least it has always appeared to shadow forth the disobedience and fall of the soul, and its redemption by Divine love."

"This little image may well be dear to you, since it suggests so many and such interesting associations."

“It may appear fanciful to say so, but I care little for any realities that do not stimulate the imagination. Will you think me very, very silly, if I declare myself passionately fond of a pantomime?”

“I never saw one, but I have always heard that they were only fit to amuse children.”

“And I like them as a child,—nay, I can laugh till I cry at their mere foolery. And yet I see something in them that lifts them out of it, for I can fancy the first pantomime to have been a rude dramatising of the story of Cupid and Psyche. Harlequin is Mercury, whose sword or Caduceus can render him invisible, and transport him whither he will; Columbine is Psyche, or the soul, whom he wants to carry off to heaven; while the Pantaloon is Charon, who seeks perpetually to drag it down to the infernal regions. The Clown, with his mouth painted to resemble the ancient comic masks, is Momus, the buffoon of heaven. Did you ever read Dr. Clarke’s Travels? He tells us that he has seen all these figures represented on an ancient vase,

very much as they are now exhibited in our pantomimes."

"You have given me a new interest in this the most suggestive of all stories."

"I fear I must wish you good morning, for I have an engagement at the Opera House."

"It is understood, then, that I am to have the honour of accompanying you at the concert."

"Oh, certainly, certainly ; but——" She paused ; and an arch yet deprecating smile made her look more winningly beautiful than ever as she continued, "Now you are going to think me very rude, and you will be very wrong ; for one may be uncivil in speech, and yet polite in intention ; or polite in speech, and very much the reverse in intention ; and my freedom is of the former kind. You have just arrived from the country, I see." As her quick eye glanced over his habiliments, Allan caught her meaning and coloured.

"A young man, and yet blush ! Nay then it is evident you have not been long in London. You will soon get over that weak-

ness—perhaps by the time you have tried on your new clothes. Pray, pray, excuse my sauciness. With such a figure and deportment you can never look otherwise than like a gentleman, but nothing is so fatal to a young man upon his preferment in London as the slightest breath of ridicule, and above all the reputation of being a quiz. People will forgive you a gross deviation from morality much more easily than a slight one from fashion. Besides, if you don't do justice to yourself, how can you expect it from others?"

"I will lose no time—I am only just arrived—indeed I was not aware—" stammered Allan, abashed at the thought that his rusticity should be so obvious.

"Charming! charming!" exclaimed Isola; "it is really quite a study, as well as a treat, to see a young man—and such a young man!—standing confused and blushing in my presence, instead of exhibiting the brazen and insolent assurance to which I have been too much accustomed. *Will* you shake hands with me, in token of forgiveness?"

"May I venture," asked Allan, as he held

and gently pressed her small soft hand, "may I venture to call again when I shall be less unfashionably attired?"

"Believe me, Mr. Latimer—No, I will not call you by that name—Believe me when I say that I shall always be most happy to see—Camillo."

Words, however friendly or fervent, are nothing in themselves,—a *caput mortuum*, a body without a soul. They derive their life, their significancy, their power, from the tone and look with which they are accompanied. Isola's parting expressions were pronounced with such a frank and tender yet bashful earnestness, while her beaming eyes attested their sincerity, that Allan felt a thrill vibrate through his whole frame as he quitted what appeared to him a scene of enchantment, a fairy bower, a bewitching dream,—and found himself once more in the Quadrant, with old Crevetti by his side.

CHAPTER IV.

"NEVER, no never," he ejaculated, as he walked away, quite unconscious what direction he was taking, "have I seen so fascinating, so irresistible a creature! Why, Signor Crevetti, you never told me that she was so exceedingly beautiful."

"*Si, si*, I tell you always she had a beautiful voice; what signify her face? *Niente, niente*,—I never look at it when I hear her sing. My eyes are in my ears."

"It is not only the witchery of her singing, her face, her figure; but did you ever see anything so exquisitely graceful, and yet so perfectly ladylike, as her dancing?"

"*Si*, I tell you what was more graceful, *molto*,—her look, her tone, her expression, so all-soul-full, when she sang the words,

“Io l’udia nei suoi bei carmi.
Trona e corona involami.”

“That indeed was most touching ; it seemed to come from her heart of hearts, and I am sure it went to mine. And then again, apart from all her professional talents and personal charms, what intelligence, what information, what cleverness !”

“*Vero, vero !* wonderful clever. Not a cavatina of Meyerbeer but what she will sing you at sight.”

“But, young as she is, where did she contrive to pick up so much knowledge of books and things ?”

“Oh, her mother have had her well educated when she was quite a *piccolina*—she loves to read books—she keeps her eyes open, and her ears *anche* ; and so every day she picks up a something, *per più, per meno*.”

“And her amiability seems equal to her other rare gifts. How playfully she lent herself to the humours of that crazy actor, and how kindly she spoke of him after he had gone !”

“Ah, she is kind in many ways—she plays every kind of music on the piano like an angel.”

“And whence does she come, this marvellous creature, this miracle of nature? Who is she? what is she? Do you know anything of her history?”

“What I know of him I can tell you in *poche parole*. Her mother, *dama Inglese*, was a singer at San Carlos,—you know him,—the great theatre at Naples. *Ebbene*,—her father, *si dice*, was a *bandito*, a captain of—how you call?—freebooters, from the mountains, who come to Naples to be cured of a bad wound, and made a vow to San Giacomo, if he got well, to—how you say it?—*menare una vita onesta*. *Così*, he got well; and as he have a great voice,—*basso superbo*,—he become a singer at San Carlos, he marry the beautiful Inglese, and they have a daughter born in the island of Ischia, *perchè* they call her Isola; so you see she has fine voice of both sides of her parentage.”

“And she is an orphan, is she not?”

“*Sì*.”

“And that is all you know of her history?”

“*Tutto.*”

Notwithstanding this assurance, Allan continued to ply his companion with questions on the same subject, until, suddenly recollecting her objections to his attire, he requested to be taken to some fashionable tailor without loss of time. Though always neatly dressed, he had hitherto been indifferent as to conformity with the last new mode; in the country, one slips unconsciously into this sort of carelessness; but, feeling now as if he were not producible, he determined neither to call upon the Lums nor any of Crevetti's pupils until he should have received a new, and in every respect a modish, equipment. A little addition to the price procured a speedy accomplishment of his wishes, and, within two days of his arrival in London, Allan, whose singularly handsome person and graceful carriage set off his habiliments to the best advantage, would not have betrayed a single external mark of rusticity to the most practised metropolitan eye.

Absorbed and even bewildered as he had been by the recent agitation of his feelings, by the startling change in his life, and a succession of engrossing and strange objects since his arrival in London, he had not omitted to write a most affectionate letter to his mother, for his heart incessantly smote him when he referred to the clandestine mode of his departure from home. With a remorseful yearning, he now wished that he had embraced her, and received her parting blessing, before he left Woodcote; but as it was too late to recall the past, he could only resolve to make such atonement as yet remained in his power, by frequently writing, and imparting to her, in full confidence, all his future plans and prospects.

Although he had procured, and diligently studied, a map of London, his purpose of calling on the Lums—an enterprise which he determined to prosecute on foot—was not so easily executed as he had anticipated. Paris is only half the size of London, yet the French have bestowed double the pains taken by the English in guiding strangers

through the labyrinth of their capital. Not only is it divided into compartments, which are so notified in every conspicuous place as to indicate at the same time the points of the compass, but, the odd and even numbers of the houses being appropriated to opposite sides of the streets, much trouble is saved to the passengers, and the risk of accidents from crossing among the crowded carriages is proportionably diminished. These facts may be deemed too notorious to need a record, but it is only by constant harping upon the advantages of any improvement, however slight, that we can eventually procure its adoption.

Not until after many wanderings and numerous inquiries did Allan finally make his way to Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury, when he found that Mr. Lum occupied a handsome-looking house, whereof the ground-floor windows were covered with notices of estates and town and country residences to be let or sold,—the whole copied out in such a large fair round hand that they seemed almost to arrest the passenger's

eye and compel perusal. Resisting this temptation, he knocked at a side door, on which was modestly inscribed the word Lum,—the fuller designation and calling of that individual being displayed over the window, in the words “Jonas Lum, Surveyor, Appraiser, and House Agent.” Formerly the word “Auctioneer” had been added, but at the earnest solicitation of his daughters, who had an insuperable objection to the hammer, he had consented, when the house-front was last painted, to omit that obnoxious finale,—a sacrifice the less regretted as he flattered himself that the fact of his proficiency in that department needed not any additional publicity.

Most wielders of the hammer, compelled to say a great deal about nothing, and habituated, in what may be literally termed “knock-down arguments,” to have all the talk to themselves, acquire a certain confidence and fluency, until, like the celebrated Mr. Puff, they have “as much to say upon a ribbon as a Raphael.” But such was by no means the case with Mr. Lum, a tall

stiff, starch, pragmatical man, who, having written two or three papers for the *Antiquarian's Magazine*, deemed himself the Thomas Hearne of Bloomsbury ; affecting a certain degree of reserve, and speaking with an oracular solemnity among those of his own class, though he could be obsequious and loquacious enough to his customers.

Ill news may fly apace, but its course is not so rapid, in these anti-connubial times, as the good news which announces that a young bachelor, who had previously been deemed a detrimental, has suddenly become a desirable. Knowing that the narrow circumstances of the Latimers would be still further straitened at the death of the mother, Mr. and Mrs. Lum, keeping studiously aloof from all communication with them, had lost no opportunity of vituperating the folly and pride of the young men, who, with hardly salt to their porridge, chose to lead an idle life, and set up for gentlemen, under the shallow pretext of devoting their time to their sick mother. No sooner, however, had they learnt, upon what they deemed un-

questionable authority, that Allan had been adopted by a rich, old, retired merchant at Woodcote, who meant to leave him all his fortune, than they bethought them, with a truly parental anxiety, of their four unmarried daughters, and at the same time felt an affectionate yearning towards the eldest son of their good friends at Woodcote.

“After all,” as Mrs. Lum very justly and feelingly observed, “flesh and blood *is* flesh and blood; and though we are so distantly connected that I hardly know how to make it out, I have always felt a real regard for those Latimers.” As the husband’s feelings were equally kind and cordial, it was mutually resolved to seek some early opportunity of renewing the acquaintance, though neither of them could immediately suggest a feasible mode of accomplishing this object. Great therefore was the delight as well as the surprise of both, when fate, as if for the purpose of anticipating their wishes, brought the object of all their disinterested solicitude to their very door.

On a small circular table of the unoccu-

pied drawing-room, into which Allan was ushered, stood a model of Stonehenge, and of the Cornish Logan or rocking-stone executed in cork; and in the glass-case of a recess were arranged, with explanatory labels of very elaborate penmanship, iron and stone celts, fragments of rusty weapons, large iron rings, rudely-carved round stones, and other rubbishy-looking odds and ends, the original purport of which, had an antiquarian ever suffered himself to be at a loss, it would have been impossible even to surmise. The loo-table in the centre of the room was of solid structure, or it could hardly have supported the three or four volumes of the Antiquarian's Magazine, with all their heavy contents, which were placed upon it.

Upon taking up one of these ponderous tomes, Allan found that it opened spontaneously at a paper signed "Druidicus;" he tried a second, a third, and a fourth, with exactly the same result;—a mystery, of which he was endeavouring to divine the cause, when Mr. Lum walked very up-

rightly into the room, welcoming his visitant with as much cordiality as if he came to employ him in the purchase or sale of a large estate, and making most particular and tender inquiries concerning the health of his excellent mother and his worthy brother.

"You are an antiquarian, I perceive," said Allan, after exchanging a few similar interrogatories and greetings.

"You *perceive*, Sir?" ejaculated Lum, glancing reproachfully at the magazines. "Surely you must have been previously aware of that fact. Doubtless, you *must* have heard that I am the Druidicus of the Antiquarian's Magazine; for I think I have understood that you are fond of literature."

"Very, but I do not recollect to have heard—I have not been so fortunate as to have read any of the papers so signed." The countenance of the antiquary fell; but as the hopes of the father-in-law *in futuro* sprung up afresh in his heart, one of his least solemn smiles regained the ascendancy of his features, and he resumed, "Allow me to repeat, that I should have thought you *must* have

heard of the letters of Druidicus, although Woodcote is such a retired place. However, I can lend you one of the volumes. It shall be that which contains my celebrated essay 'On the Shape of the Handle of the Pruning-knife of the Chief Priest, with which he cut the Sacred Mistletoe.' That paper you are sure to like, for I may say, without vanity, that for deep research, and profound interest, and skilful treatment, —however, it does not become me to repeat all that I hear from all the world. But here comes Mrs. Lum. My dear, this is Mr. Latimer, Mr. Allan Latimer, your relation, you know, from Woodcote."

"And I'm sure I'm mons'ous glad to see him," replied the wife, a short, vulgar, corpulent, over-dressed, under-educated woman, who, as she glided about without showing her feet, her petticoats touching the ground, the better to conceal her thick ankles, might have been taken for the original 'fillet of veal upon castors.' "And in course," she continued, "I *must* be glad to welcome my own kith and kin, as a body may say.

Curious enough, ar'nt it, Jonas, that only t'other day I was a sayink, Well, I should be glad, says I, to see one of those nice young men up in Lonnon; and for the matter of that, your mother, too, would have been as welcome as the flowers in May,—for I've no notion, not I, of separating families. Now Mr. L., he likes dinink out, uncommon; but, 'cept to the Freemasons' and public dinners, I don't suffer him to go without I'm asked—do I, dear? No, says I, when he's asked alone, you must cut fair, and take us as we come, fat and lean, lean and fat: ha, ha, haw!"

Allan expressed his acknowledgments for her intended hospitality towards himself and his family, though this was the first intimation he had received of it.

"La! now, only to think!" resumed the lady, who was not less voluble than voluminous; "I quite forgot to 'pologise for keeping you so long a waitink for me, but I was thrown into such a tribilation when I heard the double knock, a'most flabbergasted, as the man says in the play; for be-

tween you and I and the post, Mr. Latimer, Saturdays is always our day for routing out the house, for I can't bear filth, and London ar'n't like the country, you know, so we're obliged to do it, or else we should be in a pretty mess, in no time; shouldn't we, my dear?"

As the erudite antiquary suffered his strong mind to be swayed by the stronger will of his wife, he gave an invariable acquiescence when thus appealed to, although upon the present occasion he did venture to hint that Mr. Latimer might not wish to be let into the confidence of all her domestic arrangements. "Don't tell me, Mr. L.," was the reply, "I know what I'm about; if Mr. Latimer won't think me presumptuous for saying so. If I hadn't told him it was cleaning day, how should he have known why our gals are so long a-comink? You see, Sir, we have given them a good edication, better, a pretty sight, than ever their mother had afore 'em; but though Mr. L., thank God, is well to do in the world—better, I may say, than most of his neighbours, and there-

fore it's no objick to us—I wish 'em to be brought up to make good housewives when they marry. They all play the piano, and 'Cilla, my eldest, she sings uncommon pretty; but la! if there should come a rainy day, they won't make the pot boil by strumming a piano, or working a worsted poll-parrot staring his eyes out at a butterfly or a cabbage-rose; or knitting pusses when they've got nothink to put in 'em,—so my gals have been taught to make their own clothes when they're new, and vamp 'em up when they're old, and darn stockings, and cut out shirts for their father and their brother Tom, and even wash and iron their own collars and tippets, and handkerchers and aperns, and such like: this has been our course of edication; hasn't it, my dear?"

Not wishing to express any opinion upon so undignified a subject, and afraid of appearing discourteous to one who was in every sense his better half, Mr. Lum pretended not to have heard her, and busied himself in selecting the magazine which he meant to lend to his visitant. Ob-

serving, however, that the good housewife was occupied in fastening back the window-curtains, to protect them from the sun, Mr. Lum requested his visitant to notice that in the arrangement of his curiosities everything presented an appropriate character; the table that supported the models being circular, the favourite mystic figure of the Druids; the case being made of oak, the tree under whose boughs they always celebrated their rites; and the carved ornament at top representing the sacred mistletoe.

“And may I inquire,” asked Allan, “what is contained within these wooden doors, at the lower part of the case?” Drawing himself up to his full height, assuming a mysterious look, and speaking in a solemn whisper, the expanded house-agent replied, “You may certainly *ask*, Sir, nor shall I refuse to gratify so natural and even laudable a curiosity; but as to my showing you what is deposited within, no power on earth shall compel me to it: it would be contrary to my vow of office. I

am not a proud or vain man, Mr. Latimer; in many respects, at least in some, I am well aware that I possess no great superiority over my neighbours, but I cannot repress some little degree of exultation when I state that you see before you the Master of the Druids' Lodge of free and accepted Masons! Nay, Sir, I require no marks of respect and homage *here*,—none whatever," here the speaker looked condescendingly pompous—"not even when I inform you, that in this locked-up case are contained the Regalia, the Respect Board, the decorations, and all the emblematic insignia of my illustrious office."

Allan congratulated him on the dignities he had attained, and hearing at that moment the giggling of female voices outside the door, he expressed a hope that he should see some of the young ladies before he left the house. "Some of them, I have no doubt, will shortly present themselves," replied the father; "but I have four, Sir, four, all good and charming girls; but being Saturday, a busy day with us,

as Mrs. L. has already intimated, I fear they may not all be able to appear." As he omitted to specify how the charms which he had assigned to his daughters were respectively apportioned, it may be well to state, that in order to prevent quarrels among themselves, the young ladies had agreed that each should adopt some appropriate excellence, which was to be considered her own exclusive property, and not to be questioned or rivalled by any of the others. Priscilla, the eldest, being the least good-looking, with a cast in one of her eyes, set up for cleverness; Jemima, who was all ringlets and romance, took the sentimental and lackadaisical department; Amelia, laced in till she could hardly breathe, claimed the good figure of the family; and Harriet, who promised to rival her mother in fatness, piquing herself upon her fair skin, and the dimples not only in her cheeks, but in her shoulders and elbows, had a charter for going more *décolletée* than any of her sisters, and always wore short sleeves.

As the two latter, busied, when Allan called, in the discharge of their Saturday duties, were in such complete *deshabille* as not to admit of their dressing in time to see their visitant, only Priscilla and Jemima, who had made a flurried toilette for the purpose, presented themselves in the drawing-room, which they entered with timid awkwardness, dropping a cold half-curtsey to Allan, seating themselves with an air of constraint on the edge of their chairs, and answering the questions or observations addressed to them with a monosyllabic brevity. Many girls, especially those unaccustomed to society, though hoydening and loquacious enough among themselves, will freeze into an unsocial shyness before a single stranger. But this was not so much the cause of the embarrassment exhibited by the young ladies in question, as the repressive influence of the father, who indemnified himself for his subjection to his wife, by exercising such a rigorous and morose authority over his children, that they were always reserved and generally

silent in his presence. Mrs. Lum, however, was always ready to do the talking for the whole family, at the shortest notice and on the most reasonable terms. Having placed herself at the window, after the adjustment of the curtains, she suddenly ejaculated, "There goes Lady Trumpington's carriage, a-drivink to the Museum, I 'spose. Only to see how that vain old 'ooman does rouge! She wants to pass herself off for fat, fair, and forty, but she won't succeed, I don't think, for I'm told she don't want but one year of being sixty. How she can keep that fine carriage, without ever a shillink in her puss, I can't conceive for the life of me, unless it's all done by gambolling, for they do say she plays cards all day Sunday. Mussy on us! if there was to be such wicked doinks in my house, I should expect that some Sabbath night, just as it was a-going to strike twelve, and I was a scorink up the odd trick, I should hear Belzebub himself crying out——"

The conclusion of the sentence was prevented by another voice exclaiming, in a

hollow and mysterious whisper, "You're wanted down below;" an announcement which occasioned Allan to start up in some alarm, for the sound seemed to proceed from the wainscot, close to his right ear. An irrepressible shout of laughter from Mrs. Lum, and a giggle from the girls, soon assured him that the words he had heard were not of diabolical origin.

"Well, I declare!" panted the former, quite out of breath with her cachinnations, "was there ever anything so curious as that? Only to see how funnily odds and ends, and tops and bottoms, do come together! Rayley, it's a'most enough to frighten some people out of their wits; but you're in no joppardy, Mr. Latimer, so you may sit down again, without any fear of a call from old Nick: ha, ha, haw!"

"It is doubtless Sir Barnaby Briggs, respecting the house in the square," said the husband; "I expected him about this hour:" and so saying, he stalked out of the room, preserving the same unaltered solemnity of his visage; for it did not become

the Master of the Druids' Lodge to laugh, or even to smile. "You see, Sir," resumed his spouse, "Jonas is in the habit of sittink up here, writing his antiquary papers, and what not, for he can't 'bide being bothered when he's a-thinkink, no more he didn't ought, for he don't often do it, and so an iron pipe let into the wall goes right into the counting-house, that he may call down for anything he requires, and that Tom may call up to him when his father's wanted below. It's uncommon convenient, arn't it?"

"A very ingenious contrivance, but rather startling to a stranger," replied Allan.

"It arn't the fust time, by a good many, that people have been took in by it, and frightened, wuss than you was. Did you ever hear the story of Mrs. Alderman Tubbs? La, no; how should ye? It's a rare good 'un, I promise ye. Mrs. Alderman Tubbs, you see, she came to me for the character of a cook, who had just left us, and she sot, just as you may be a-doing now, with her ear close to the pipe. 'But,

says she, '*can* Susan Crump,' (that was the name of the cook,) '*can* she make good fish-sauce? for I've hardly met with one that doesn't ile the butter in melting it. Now, I myself,' says she, 'am uncommon petiklar about my melted butter, and as to my husband the alderman—' Well, Mr. Latimer, before ever she could get out another word, Tom bawls up, through the pipe, right into her right ear, 'He's a dirty, drunken, good-for-nothing feller;' for you see, Tom had been sent to inquire the character of a porter, who came to be hired, and he was to let his father know directly he came in. Wasn't it a curious conjunction? Well, what with the fright, and what with the supposed insult to the alderman, Mrs. Tubbs, she gave sich a scream, and became asterical; but that's not the worst on't, for instead of the little bottle of thieves' vinegar, I snatched up the markink ink, and held it so close to her nose, that I smeared it all over. And now it was my turn to be frightened, for in a minute or two I said, says I, 'Lor a mussy! for certain sure she's

a-going to die, for she's a-turning black in the face !' So I rang the bell, and shouted Help ! Help ! so loud, that it brought her to her senses again as pert as a pearmonger, and in runs Tom to know what the row was about, and when I told him, and he saw her nose kiver'd with ink, he laughed till I really thought he'd a-bust."

The whole gelatinous rotundity of the loquacious dame undulated responsively to her own hearty laugh, at the conclusion of which she hastily collected her breath, and resumed, "But I was uncommon sorry for the accident, for she drove up in her own carriage to the private door, and that always looks well, for in course people wasn't to know she came about the character of a servant. There now, Mr. Latimer, I was a-telling you, ye know, what a good manager my 'Cilla is. Would you ever think that silk gownd was a turn'd 'un ? Fact, as I'm sitting here ; and, what's more, last week she dropped ever so much mustard—'Cilla's uncommon fond of mustard—upon the front breadth, (served

her right, and so I told her, for not wearing her black aporn,) and got every atom of it out with French chalk and a bit of flanning. To think of the wear she has had out of that gownd, and it only cost two-and-fourpence a yard at fust."

"La! Ma!" cried the wearer of this enduring article, who had been actively using her eyes since her father left the room, though her mother had monopolized all the talk, "what can Mr. Latimer know or care about silk dresses?"

"That's a pretty thing too, arn't it, that yaller Swish musling of Jemima's,—that's my taste, and I think it becomes her, 'specially with that band, 'cause yeller and laylock goes so well together."

Emboldened by the absence of her father, Priscilla now took her full share in the conversation, frequently talking at the same time as her mother, as she rattled away about the Regent's Park, and the Zoological Gardens on a Sunday, and the Islington Assembly, and the Adelphi Theatre, for which they often got orders, through a

friend who was one of the actors, and the Museum, in visits to which (the admission being gratuitous, and no coach-hire necessary) they were frequently indulged by their parents. During this colloquy, her sister, stealing furtive glances through a whole weeping-willow of corkscrew ringlets, but saying nothing, peered at Allan, and instantly cast down her eyes when she was detected, and sighed, and palpitated, and threw herself into a lackadaisical attitude, with a coquetishness that was meant to appear exceedingly bashful and interesting, until her manœuvres were interrupted by Priscilla's exclamation of "La! Jemy,"—such was the endearing but somewhat masculine abbreviation of her name,—“don't sigh so, or Mr. Latimer will fancy you're in love.”

“Answer for yourself, 'Cilla,” cried the mother, rather sharply, “and don't snub your sister; for you know, poor thing! she was always given to dumps and doldrums, ever since she was a babby, and used to cry, without any call, when I was a-nussing of her. Is any thing the matter with you, child?”

“Nothing in the world, dear Ma; only I have just finished reading the most heart-rending novel that ever drowned the pitying reader in floods of tears,—‘Sympathy and Sentiment, or the Sorrows of Victorine.’ Good heavens! what miseries were endured by that victim of sensibility!” With clasped hands, the weeping willow threw up her eyes, fixed them on the hook in the centre of the ceiling, which would have supported a lamp, had there been one, again lowered them to the ground, suffered her hands to fall listlessly upon her lap, and gave a tender sigh.

“Stuff and nonsense!” exclaimed the mother: “it’s well your father don’t know you read such trash, or he’d chuck it right into the fire.”

Can this be the girl, thought Allan, whom I heard giggling and chattering outside the door, notwithstanding all the sorrows of Victorine?

“Gals will have different ways with ’em,” said the mother; “now my eldest, she’s as merry as a grig, always was. Come, ’Cilla

dear, 'spose you cheer us up a bit with a song; not that dismal ditty of the crazy gal in the mad'us, but something funny—'The Musical Wife,' or 'The Old Maid,' or 'Sweet Jenny Jones,' like they sing in the farces."

"Pa don't allow us to sing Italian or French," said Priscilla, seating herself at the instrument; "he thinks it highly improper: but I'm not going to accommodate Ma with any of her comic vulgarities that she's so fond of." She accordingly sang 'Sweet Home,' with some little huskiness in her throat, but with a great deal of expression in her eye, which was immovably and tenderly fixed upon Allan during the whole performance. As this, however, was the truant orb, which indulged in a little obliquity of vision, there might not have been any design either in its direction or expression. Their visitant's confession, that he was himself a vocalist, occasioned an eager petition from the whole trio that he would favour them with a song; Priscilla urging, very strenuously, that she had a right to

call upon him ; and he accordingly sang two or three English ballads (for he had the fear of the solemn Jonas before his eyes), which were received by his auditors with unbounded delight and applause.

His visit having now been protracted to an almost unreasonable length, he took his leave, but not until he had promised Mrs. Lum that he would dine with them on the following Wednesday. Scarcely had he reached the corner of the street when, hearing hasty footsteps, he looked round, and saw the Master of the Druids' Lodge running after him (almost the only time he was ever known to break out of a walk), bearing the promised volume of the magazine, which Allan took with many apologies for having forgotten to claim it, and pursued his way.

CHAPTER V.

No sooner had their visitant left the house than Mrs. Lum waddled down stairs to inform her husband of the invitation she had given, and to advise with him concerning the parties who should be bidden to the feast; and no sooner were the father and mother thus engaged, than their five children assembled in the drawing-room, to talk over the all-important subject of their new acquaintance, or, as they were now proud to call him, their relation, not without a distant hope, on the part of more than one of them, that he might be still more closely connected with the family.

“What a beautiful man!” cried Amelia, who had hastily thrown on a dressing-gown that she might join in the chat

"How do *you* know? You never saw him," said Jemima.

"Didn't I, though? I know better than that, Jemy, for when I heard the double knock, I ran to the top of the stairs, and watched him all the way up; and what's more, when I found it impossible to be dressed in time, I crept down in my petticoat to the drawing-room door, and peeped through the keyhole."

"La! 'Mely," objected the eldest sister, with a reproving frown; "how very indelicate! Suppose Pa or Tom had seen you?"

"Oh! I should have skipped back again, four stairs at a time, when I heard any one moving."

"And not one of you told me that he was here; you nasty, spiteful things, you!" exclaimed Harriet, swelling and colouring with vexation.

"Why, you know, dear Harriet," coaxed Jemima, in a soft and soothing voice, "it would have been no use telling you, when you hadn't half done your darning, and had got your hair in papers."

“ And why am I to have all the darning, and washing, and ironing of gloves and ribbons? I’m sure one might as well be Cinderella. I’m quite a drudge, and it’s a shame; that’s what it is!”

Not only was Harriet fat, but she was so large and masculine in her figure, that her brother Tom had given her the nickname of Harry the Boatswain, or, to use his own pronunciation, the Bo’son; in accordance with which unfraternal habit, he only noticed her statement of grievances, pathetic as it was, by exclaiming, “Bo’son Harry seems to be in a passion;” and then, recurring to the subject of Allan, he continued, “I had a famous squint at him,—No, the squint’s in ’Cilla’s department.”

“None of your impudence, Mr. Saucebox,” snapped Priscilla; “nothing so vulgar as personal remarks,—and besides they come with a very bad grace from such a red-headed Rufus as you!”

“Draw it mild, ’Cilla!” resumed the brother, making a hideous mouth at her. “Well, I was going to say that as soon as

I heard the double knock I ran to the counting-house window, and stared at the gentleman all the time that I held my nose to the glass."

"Then I'm sure it wasn't a looking-glass," cried 'Cilla, laughing heartily at her own joke.

"And I must say," resumed Tom, in a great hurry, as he was not provided with an immediate retort, "that a better-looking or more stylishly dressed chap I never saw. His coat is the regular go among the tip-top swells—made by Diedrichson—I can swear to the cut—and spic and span new."

"And how charmingly he sings!" added Jemima. "Oh how enviable, how blissful a fate to wander with that man by the side of some translucent stream, silvered by the moonbeams, while the ringdove coos from the eglantine, and the nightingale pours her love-song from the grove!"

"Bravo, Jemy!" sneered the brother; "what a pretty bit of pastoral! Pity you were not born a shepherdess, with a crook in your hand." The sisters smiled, but

Jemima, looking still more pensive, and heaving a deep sigh, continued,—

“And *did* you notice his small white hand? Heavens! *what* a hand for putting on the wedding-ring!”

“I find from his conversation,” said Priscilla, “that his mother keeps a carriage!” The whole party immediately became silent, looking at one another with an awe-struck and yet complacent expression.

“And it is certain,” pursued Tom, “that he has been adopted by a rich old fellow at Woodcote, who means to make him his heir. What a catch!”

“What a catch!!” repeated Priscilla.

“What a catch!!!” echoed Jemima.

“What a catch!!!!” re-echoed Amelia, keeping up the *crescendo* tone of amazement.

“And I have never seen him!” sobbed Harriet, bursting into tears.

“Here’s a rig!” cried Tom; “the Bo’son’s blubbering!” There was something so ludicrous in the phrase, as well as in the appearance of the great overgrown weeping girl,

that her companions burst into a simultaneous laugh, whereat Harriet became so deeply incensed, that she snatched up the hearth-brush, and would probably have given some of them cause to remember the weight of the "Bo'son's" arm, had they not suddenly dispersed, and fled giggling to their respective rooms.

"Now, my dear Jonas!" said Mrs. Lum to her husband, both being seated in consultation; "as there's no knowing what may come of this lucky visit,—for Mr. Latimer looked uncommon sweet upon 'Cilla, and it would be sich an objick to him, as he's so fond of music, to get a gal that sings,—I must confess I should like to make a favourable impression upon him."

"Quite right, quite right, Mrs. L.; but I flatter myself that I have already succeeded in that object, for I have apprized him that I am master of the Druids' Lodge, and I have lent him the volume of the Magazine which contains——"

"Psha! never mind that! I was a think-ink of our dinner-party—who we should

ask so as to let him see that we've a genteel set of acquaintance,—and we had better settle the pint at once; 'cause, if we're too long about it, we shan't have time enough. Now, the genteelest people we know, out and out,—because they're the richest, and have got a country-house at Hackney, and drive a four-wheel shay of their own,—is the Snodgrasses,—but then they keep a shop."

"True, Mrs. L., but it's one of the most thriving haberdashers' in London, and you forget that Mr. Snodgrass is a Freemason, though not a master."

"Still he keeps a shop,—which, somehow or other, sticks in my gizzard uncommon—that's to say, 'cause it might stick in Mr. Latimer's. Now, what think you of Mr. Snaggs, the dentist, and his wife? He's in the profession, you know; in course we should say he was a surgeon, which always sounds well; and he's sich a funny man,—quite a wag; and Mrs. Snaggs, she *must* be a genteel 'ooman, for she's a niece, you know, of Sir Matthew Mumpisson, the City knight,

who was once Lord Mayor. In short, Jonas, I've made up my mind to have them."

"I should particularly wish you to invite Mr. and Mrs. Snaggs," said the husband, with the air of a man laying down the law, though he was receiving and obeying it.

"Well, Jonas; then I shall ask the two Popkineses, the clerks in the Museum, or, as we should say, officers of the Museum, for that word always sounds well, don't it? 'cept a sheriff's officer,—that's no go; ha, ha, ha! Mr. Popkins he's wonderful clever, though some people think him sich a prig,—and then he has got all the hard words in the Museum by heart; and Nic, Tom's friend, is a smart dashy young chap, and seems uncommon disposed to cast a sheep's eye at our Amelia, for he gave her a brooch t'other day, with a bleeding heart right in the middle of it; and I do suspect that she's a nettink of a puss for him upon the sly. Now our dining-room won't 'commodate no more than ten,—that is, not to have elber-room,—and that 'll be jist it. You and I, and the two eldest gals, and Tom, makes five; and the two Snaggses

is seven ; and the two Popkinses is nine ; and Mr. Latimer jist makes ten percisely."

"You're quite right, Mrs. L., quite : I see you understand my wishes perfectly, and I shall leave all the arrangement of the dinner to you ; for with so many more important matters upon my mind, it can hardly be expected——"

"In course not—you've no call to trouble your head about it. I shall talk that over with 'Cilla, who has got quite a genius for cookery, and indeed is petiklar clever, I may say, in all the fine arts."

Great and general were the bustle and commotion in the Lum family in preparing for such an unusual occurrence as a grand dinner-party ; grave and manifold were the consultations of the two elder sisters as to what they should wear ; deep the heart-burning of the juniors when they learnt that they were only to make their appearance at the tea-table. Amelia, whose mind matched her narrow waist, who was, moreover, an artful and forward girl, and vain enough of her figure to believe that she must

inevitably make a conquest of Allan Latimer if she were only allowed fair play, determined, if possible, to get a seat at the dinner-table, notwithstanding the cruel interdict that had shut her out. Well knowing that her mother "ruled the roast," her first pathetic appeal was in that quarter, and, when this met with a decided negative, she resolved to try the effect of a little cajolery upon the father, to whose besetting foible she was no stranger.

"How, 'Mely," frowned the Freemason as he was passing up to his own room at a late hour; "not in bed yet? This is wrong, very wrong; I cannot allow such a waste of coals and candle."

"Pray, pray, dear papa!" petitioned 'Mely coaxingly, "let me sit up ten minutes longer, that I may finish the third reading of your last paper in the 'Antiquary's Magazine.' It is so learned, and *so* deep, and so *very* interesting."

"Well, well, child!" replied "Druidicus," patting her head condescendingly, and almost smiling; "be it so; since I find you're

so well employed, and not wasting your time."

"You know, pa, I could talk to Mr. Latimer all about this paper, and those in the volume you lent him, if I were only to dine at table next Wednesday."

"So you could, so you could. I'll speak to your mother about it. Good night, dear!" As the mother continued inexorable, notwithstanding this sudden outburst of antiquarian enthusiasm, 'Mely, rendered desperate, had recourse to an ungenerous trick, which, it is to be hoped, nothing but the extremity of the occasion could have provoked. Jemima (she of the ringlets and romance) possessed but one dress gown in a wearable state, and a very smart one it was, being a book muslin, with red ribbons drawn through the tucks, to match the sash and streamers of the same colour. After fifty alterations the weeping willow of cork-screw curls had received its last spiral touch, and Jemima, looking complacently back at the glass as she receded from it, advanced to the closet to take down the dress, which,

after a vigilant inspection, she had that very morning hung tenderly upon the peg with her own hands, when a piercing scream that echoed through the house announced some dire catastrophe. Loud as it was, it was scarcely equal to the enormity of the occasion, for lo! the gown—the *only* dress gown—was lying on the closet-floor, completely soused and discoloured with dirty water, which appeared to have proceeded from an overturned washhand-basin beside it.

“That horrid cat!” exclaimed Amelia, running in and contemplating the mishap with a look of infinite amazement and dismay; “she’s always doing some mischief.”

“Oh, ‘Mely! ‘Mely!” sobbed her sister, who had thrown herself into a chair, with as much despairing self-abandonment as was consistent with the careful and becoming disposition of her ringlets; “malignant fate ever darts its most poisonous arrows into the tenderest and most sensitive heart! I am the victim of a conspiracy—the martyr of some diabolical plot. Could

a cat take down the dress from its peg, or place the washhand-basin in the closet, or upset it so very carefully over the gown so as to drench it so completely? No, no; it has been done on purpose, by some base assassin, some vile incendiary, some fiend in a human form."

"Well, Jemy, it can't be helped now, however it may have happened, and you must make up your mind not to appear at table, for it's almost dinner-time, and you've got no other dress, you know. I must run and tell ma of this shocking accident; I dare say she'll be frightened at your scream,—and to be sure it was ridiculous enough for such a trifle." With these words the treacherous 'Mely, who had pinched in her waist to its very smallest dimensions, and made her toilet beforehand, so as to be quite ready for the anticipated emergency at the very shortest notice, ran from the room to communicate the disaster to her parents, which she did in such a manner as very seriously to compromise the cat. At that busy and anxious moment there was no

time for investigation ; Jemima and the cat—for the absent are always wrong—were blamed for their negligence, with an additional and very sagacious remark on the part of Mrs. Lum, “that there wasn’t a mischeevouser animal in the world than a cat, when it had once made up its mind to *be* mischeevous ;” and as the bearer of the tidings was seen to be ready dressed *à quatre épingles*, she was desired to take her sister’s place,—an order which she immediately obeyed by securing a chair in the drawing-room next to that which she thought most likely to be occupied, on his arrival, by Mr. Latimer.

Meanwhile, as Jemima, brooding over her miseries, adverted to ’Mely’s instant accusation of the cat, which had all the appearance of being premeditated,—to the circumstance of her being ready dressed so much before her time,—and the galling fact of her having been actually invited by her parents to take her place at the dinner-table, which she presently learnt from Harriet,—it suddenly flashed across her indignant mind that the whole must have been a treacher-

ous and wicked plot for the express purpose of supplanting her with the white-handed and handsome heir of the rich old merchant. The desire of vengeance instantly succeeding to this conviction, she flew to 'Mely's drawer, ferreted out from its six silver-paper wrappings her favourite brooch, the gift of Nic Popkins, and smashed it beneath her heel,—tore into little bits an ardent and encomiastic valentine immeasurably valued because it was suspected to have been the production of the aforesaid Nic,—broke into three pieces a slate-pencil, which was preserved as a relic because the same party had gallantly cut a point to it with his own knife;—snipped to rags the silken purse whose intended destination she had always strongly suspected,—carefully replaced all the fragments in the drawer,—returned to her own room, and endeavoured to solace herself by anticipating 'Mely's rage when she should discover the mischief, and by perusing 'Love and Suicide,' a high-flown sentimental novel which she had furtively smuggled into the house.

While this domestic tragedy was enacting up-stairs, the rest of the family, excepting its master, were collected in the drawing-room, all tricked out in their very best, sitting very stiffly upright for fear of deranging their dress, beginning to feel very nervous as the dinner-hour approached, and quarrelling among themselves (for want of any better subject) as to who was likely to come first.

“What a bore!” cried Tom; “they have got the pavement up in Charlotte Street, just the way that the Snaggses will come. I told the fellows we had a grand dinner-party coming, and they promised to have the stones down again by five o’clock,—but I doubt it. ‘Cilla dear! I wish you’d just look round the corner with your squint eye—you needn’t leave your chair—and see whether the pavement’s all smooth.”

Endeavouring to dart an angry glance at the utterer of this impertinence, though one of her orbs *would* look quite away from him, Priscilla tartly exclaimed, “How many times must I tell you that mine is not a

squint, which looks inward, but a cast, which looks outward, and which many people think a great beauty?"

"Do they? then you had better keep it by all means, for it's the only one you've got," rejoined the brother.

"And how many beauties have *you* got, I wonder, besides your red hair?"—This altercation was fortunately checked by the entrance of "Druidicus," whose austere manners were generally a bar to conversation, except upon the part of himself and his wife; and shortly afterwards the company began to arrive, all punctual as the clock, for people who are not often invited to a good dinner never run the risk of spoiling it by exceeding the appointed hour.

"What a very curious coincidence!" said Mrs. Lum; "I said Mr. Latimer would come first—and here he is! Well, I dare say all the others will be here immediently, if nothink don't happen to purvent 'em." This safe augury being soon accomplished, Allan had the honour of being introduced to Mrs. Snaggs, as "the niece of Sir Matthew

Mumpissoon ;" to Mr. Snaggs, "a gentleman of the profession ;" and to Mr. Popkins and Mr. Nicholas Popkins, "officers of the Museum." Dinner being shortly afterwards announced,—for the master of the house enforced a rigid punctuality in all things,—he handed down the niece of Sir Matthew, who was of course entitled to precedence ; Allan, at the instance of her mother, took charge of Priscilla ; Popkins senior, having first taken off his spectacles, wiped them, and put them in their case, and the case in his pocket, offered his arm to Amelia ; and Tom brought up the rear with his friend Nic Popkins, whom he took by the tip of his little finger and handed down with a mock ceremony, though he thought his attitude so graceful that he could not help looking at the glass as he strutted out of the room.

Upon no altar are so many old jokes offered up to Momus as upon a dinner-table, where, as the risible and edible propensities excite each other, a small jest often provokes a great laugh, and every guest, with a sort of inverse ratio gratitude, thinks himself

bound to deliver bad things from his mouth, in return for the good things that he puts into it,—a liberty of which the waggish Mr. Snaggs took full advantage on the present occasion, though his jokes were too old and too little of their age to bear transcription into the pages of this history.

“Our friend sets up for a wag,” whispered Priscilla to Allan, “but sometimes he is nothing better than a chatterbox. He’s a dentist, you know; and I once ventured to tell him, when he was running on in this way, that he held everybody’s jaw but his own—Ha! ha!”

“Them are scollop’d oysters,” said Mrs. Lum, cataloguing the dishes; “and what answers to ’em yonder is a pig’s face.”

“Then the answer comes before the question,” laughed Snaggs, “for I never heard the oysters say a word. I’m not fond of pig’s face, so I’ll take a slice of the edge-bone, after all, or rather of the beef, for Mr. Lum might find it difficult to cut the bone thin enough. But no carrots, if you please: I hate carrots.”

“Do you hear that?” whispered Priscilla, aside to Tom. “He’s not fond of pig’s face, and he hates carrots: if you’ve a grain of politeness, you ought to quit the table instantly.” Taking clever advantage of a momentary pause, Mrs. Lum exclaimed, in the intervals of tilting her plate, and ladling up the gravy with a broad-tipped knife,—“I see Lady Trumpington has fresh painted her carriage. I believe your mother’s char’ot, Mr. Latimer, is yaller?” Allan silently assented; the visitors looked at him with an increased respect; and Popkins senior, bowing till his chin touched the turkey’s protruding leg, and looking very deferential, hoped he might have the honour of taking wine with him. “Here’s a famous pidging-pie, and some broccilo to eat with it,” said the hostess. “How funny it looks,—don’t it?—seeing all the pidgings lying upon their backs, with their claws up in the air, as if they were praying to be let out! And how vexatious that I should have such a poor appetite to-day! but the fact is, I had quite a turn this morning; for I happened to be a

passing of the Serpentine jest as they were dragging it for a beautiful young gal that had drowned herself for love ; and the boatmen cried out ‘ We’ve got the body ! ’ which made me quite qualmish ; but when they pulled it up, what should it be but an old Jew clothes-man, with a long beard and three hats on his head ? Such a disappointment ! Mr. Popkins,” continued the hostess, with a look and tone of excusable triumph in the grandeur of her dinner—“ Mr. Popkins, there’s apple-pie and tapioco-pudd’n ! Mr. Nicholas Popkins, there’s custards !—you’ll excuse the cups being of different patterns, but my children do break things uncommon, though they’re old enough to know better. ‘Cilla dear, I won’t have you eat any more of the pudd’n ; remember how it disagreed with you at our last dinner-party, only a few months ago. Won’t nobody take nothink more ? I’m afraid you don’t like your dinner. Petic’lar poor feeders, to be sure !”

During the repast the elder Popkins and his host had mostly conversed with each

other on the subject of the British antiquities in the Museum, while the younger brother had filled Tom with envy by describing a horse he had just bought,—the stable and its occupants being the only subject upon which the latter was competent to maintain a conversation. “Tom!” cried the father, rebukingly—“you talk of nothing but follies and frivolities. I wish you would pay a little more attention to antiquities, and qualify yourself, in my absence, to explain my collection to strangers.”

“Well, so I do. When the gentleman asked me the probable use of the iron hoop found in the South Down Barrow, didn’t I tell him it must have gone round the wheel of the barrow? I’m not sure that I shan’t write a book to prove it, one of these days.”

“La, Tom!” cried the mother, “I’m sure nothink that comes out of your head will ever be read.”

“Unless some one plucks a hair out of it,” exclaimed Cilla, laughing heartily at her own sally.

When the wine was placed upon the table, Mrs. Lum, beginning with the niece of Sir Matthew Mumpisson, audibly drank the health of every one present, politely calling the attention of those who did not immediately hear her by repeating their names in a louder key,—an example which was followed by the rest of the family. After two or three rounds of port and sherry, which Priscilla and Amelia, on a significant wink from their mother, respectively declined, the ladies withdrew, and Allan, finding very little attraction in the conversation of his remaining companions, soon followed to the drawing-room, where he found that Harriet, the youngest sister, had been added to the party, in all the full-blown pride of her own plumpness, displayed to the best advantage by a low dress and short sleeves.

“Are we not to have the pleasure of seeing your sister Jemima?” he inquired, addressing himself to Amelia, as he took a chair beside her.

“No; poor dear Jemy has met with a sad accident: our horrid cat has spoiled the dress

she meant to wear. That cat ought to be hung. I never was more distressed at anything in all my life. And then only to think of that unfeeling Mr. Snaggs turning the accident into fun, and saying that it was literally a *catastrophe* !”

“I never saw more profuse ringlets than your sister Jemima’s; indeed, you have all fine hair: and how nicely Miss Lum’s is arranged, particularly behind !”

“What, ’Cilla’s? Ah, but consider what an immense advantage she has! With that eye of hers she can see the back of her head just as well as the front. How do you like Nic Popkins? isn’t he a smart young man? And he ought to continue a young man all his life, Mr. Snaggs says, for if he doesn’t he’ll be old Nick. He cuts such a dash in the Park on a Sunday with his tandem !”

“I cannot say that I admire a tandem.”

“La! and I think it so stylish. Why, if he had another horse on the side of each of those that he drives, it would be four-in-hand, you know.” Mrs. Lum, not by any means approving this flirtation, as she

had appropriated Allan to her eldest daughter, found some pretext for calling Amelia away, at the same time making a signal to Priscilla to take her place,—an object which was frustrated by Harriet, who, thinking it high time that she should have a little chat with their handsome visitant, darted into the vacant chair, and maintained the seat she had occupied, in spite of all her mother's frowns, nods, winks, and pointings. The other gentlemen shortly made their appearance, and Harriet was authoritatively ordered to make tea. "This comes of being the youngest," she whispered to Allan—"I am the drudge of the whole family. I hate a party when I don't dine at table, for we have hashed meat or bubble-and-squeak for a week afterwards; and 'pa and 'ma always finish the port and sherry that's left, leaving us nothing but the nasty old ginger-wine. It's such a trouble making tea for so many! I wish you would sit by my side, and help me."

To the great discomfiture of 'Cilla and her mother—for Jemima was evidently making

the most of her dimples—Allan did as he was desired. After the tea-things had been removed, he sang two or three times “by particular request,” when he patiently went through a severe course of ballads from Miss Lum, who seemed very much disposed to justify her sister’s averment as to her vocal interminability. Taking advantage of the first move from the piano, he at length made his bow and left the house, secretly resolving that his acquaintance with the Lum family should never be extended beyond the bounds of common civility.

CHAPTER VI.

THE concert in which Allan had undertaken to play a violoncello accompaniment to Signora Guardia, and which was crowded with persons of fashion and distinction, passed off most successfully, all being enchanted with the wonderful powers and surpassing graces of the beautiful vocalist, while a buzz of female voices ran round the room, inquiring the name of the handsome young stranger who had accompanied her with such admirable skill. Their curiosity was rather excited than allayed by the answers of Crevetti, his only apparent acquaintance, who, in imparting his name, added that he was a gentleman from the country, that his residence in London would be of short duration, and that he had kindly undertaken to attend his pupils so long as he

himself should be incapacitated from doing so by the accident to his hand.

Here was a stimulating story to the idlers who are ever thirsting for gossipry and excitement! Allan was a new "Wandering Minstrel,"—a hero in disguise, ay, and in the most interesting of all disguises—that of a remarkably handsome and fashionably dressed young man. As a substitute for Crevetti he was everywhere gladly received—he discharged his delegated duty at several public and private concerts; and, as the Italian's terms were high, he was not less surprised than gratified to find, at the end of the first month, that the moiety of his earnings amounted to no inconsiderable sum. Magnified to his eyes by the economical habits of his previous life and his ignorance of London expenses, it pleased him the more because it afforded him a reasonable prospect of immediate support without withdrawing a single shilling from the family at Woodcote, whose comforts were of much more importance to him than his own.

Isola had kindly requested him to call

upon her as often as he found it convenient,—a permission of which he was so glad to avail himself that scarcely a day passed without his seeing her, and never did he leave her presence without a deeper and more heartfelt admiration of her varied graces, her unrivalled gifts and attainments. More than once had he been invited to her evening parties, which were in high repute for their manifold attractions, the all-accomplished hostess not only entertaining her guests with her musical and conversational powers, but occasionally delighting them with improvisations, both serious and comic, upon subjects given by the guests. Here he met a curious medley of London society—peers, members of Parliament, authors, musical performers both amateur and professional, actors and actresses, men of real and of would-be fashion, whose language, manners, minds, and subjects of discourse, all assuming a metropolitan type and character, were either so completely unintelligible to him, or so little in unison with his own principles and sentiments, that, feeling his utter incom-

petency to mingle in the conversation, he usually sat apart, silent and abashed, though not always unamused.

After Isola's performances, indeed, all other sounds were but as a tinkling cymbal to his ear, all other impressions were unexciting to his heart. He brooded over their memory, absent even in the midst of company, and requiring no other entertainment than his own musing thoughts. Gladly would he have shared the privilege of others, when he saw them thus crowding round to discourse with her; but in such society, whose superiority to himself in colloquial readiness he instantly recognised, he wanted courage and confidence for the attempt. Enough for him if he could pick up an occasional remark or repartee that fell from her lips: enough for him to sit still and wonder at the ever-varying powers of mind with which she adapted herself to her different colloquists, at her perfect ease and self-possession, at her playful vivacity combined with the respect that she evinced for others, and quietly yet decisively exacted in return.

Nor did this latter power of repressing impertinence appear to be superfluous, for more than once had he noticed a rude stare and an impudently leering look in some of the visitants, while he had been an involuntary hearer of whispering insinuations at which he found it difficult to repress his indignation, so completely were they opposed to his own profound reverence of Isola, and his deep conviction of her purity. That such injurious surmises should proceed from parties who were sharing her hospitality, and for whom she was gratuitously displaying her unrivalled talents, appeared an ingratitude not less wicked than cruel and wanton. He had yet to learn that there exists in London a class of profligates who consider a foreigner and an actress, especially if she be lone and unprotected, a fair object for their licentious attacks, and who will not scruple to assail her reputation the more bitterly because they may have failed to undermine her virtue.

With still greater surprise did he learn that some of these parties, who made no

secret of their unhallowed aims, were husbands, fathers, men beyond the meridian of life, whose age as well as their position in society rendered their unprincipled designs doubly revolting. Both old and young, however, of this dissipated crew were restrained as well as charmed by the guarded and decorous conduct of Isola, who evinced a spirit and energy that instantly and effectually repressed every attempt, either by word or gesture, at undue familiarity or freedom.

One peculiarity in Isola's demeanour was her almost incessant restlessness, both of person and countenance. Rarely would she sit for many minutes in the same place, and if she did she frequently sank into a sudden reverie, from which she would break into unconscious laughter, or melt into unheeded tears. In one of his morning visits Allan ventured to notice and inquire the cause of this habit. "I will answer no questions," was the smiling reply, "so long as you call me Signora. Are you not my brother? do I not call you Camillo? Why then do you not treat me as a sister?"

“I will do so if I may baptize you afresh from the waters of the Borromean Lake, and not only call you Isola, but Isola Bella.”

“I quarrel with nothing but the cold word Signora. Do you ask why I am so restless? Because I am an exile,—because I can neither know peace nor repose in a foreign land,—because my heart, like a dog that has lost his master, cannot remain still, but is ever anxious, ever on the quest, until it finally resolves to turn towards home and seek him there. Incessantly is every one of my senses on the *qui vive* that it may snatch at some association connected with Italy, with Naples, with my native and beautiful Island of Ischia, and the friends I have left behind me. Why have I fitted up this little garden with its flowers, its laurels, and its tiny bay-tree, except to remind me of my home? This tuberose—Camillo’s favourite flower—wafts to me a thousand pleasant memories; there is a silent eloquence in its fragrance that is at once perfume and music to my soul. Yonder Psyche is the work of his hands, and, as I gaze at it, I fly back to Italy

upon its outstretched wings. You saw me burst yesterday into tears because a yellow butterfly, brought hither, I conclude, by one of the plants, settled upon my hand.—Exactly the same circumstance occurred when I was sitting beside my mother's death-bed at Naples, and methought her spirit had wafted me back that little soul-emblem from the flowers I planted on her grave, as a memorial of her love. You wondered t'other day that I should suddenly spring from my chair, and dance about the room for joy. The tune played by a passing organ had recalled a happy day when I danced to it at Sorrento."

"You seem, indeed, to have a most excitable temperament. I should hardly have thought that trifles so light would have produced such powerful effects upon your imagination and your feelings."

"And why not? A spark setting fire to a train may blow up a citadel or a city; and association, the gunpowder of the mind, may be as easily kindled, and as expansive when inflamed. Looking out upon my little Italian garden, and seeing nothing of the

street below, I sometimes imagine the noise and the rumbling of the passing vehicles to be the roar of the storm-chafed Mediterranean, as I have heard it dashing against the rocks of Ischia. London has my body, you see, but my heart and my thoughts are frequently far, far away, amid the myrtle-groves or beside the music-breathing shores of my own beautiful and sunny land."

"And yet you must have found some pleasure in your English abode, if I may judge by the variety of trinkets and ornaments with which you have decorated your apartment."

"With the exception of this figure of Psyche—the work, as I have already told you, of my dear Camillo—they are all gifts. I am going to run the risk of losing your good opinion—that is to say, if I have already gained it. You will think me mercenary, sordid, perhaps mean-spirited, when I confess to you that, as I came hither, encountering your chilling climate, and not less cold and uncongenial manners, for the sole purpose of making money, I never decline

it, never refuse a present—no, not even when I am well aware that the secret motives of the donor would authorise me in considering it an insult. You start, you seem surprised—and I do not wonder; but listen to me, and you will perhaps think me justified.—Among a few friends whom I respect because they respect me, others have sought my acquaintance—have almost thrust themselves into my house, and tender me their insidious flattery and gifts, from motives which I cannot fail to detect, but which, from my unprotected situation, I have not the means to resent as I could wish. By receiving their offerings and rejecting themselves, I can at once punish them and promote my own object, which is the speedy attainment of a certain sum, that I may the sooner return to Italy. I make them pay but a small penalty for the great and grievous wrong they would inflict upon me;—nay, how can they call it a penalty at all? since I never hold out a false hope, but sternly discountenance their advances, and repudiate their homage, even when

they are depositing their offerings upon my altar."

"Insolent profligates ! I wonder how you can repress your indignation in their presence. And whence comes the calm self-possession with which you receive the compliments of other and very different characters—men of talent and of honour, who respect not less deeply than they admire you ? Such flattering tribute might turn the strongest head,—but in you, Isola Bella, I cannot perceive a single trace of vanity, affectation, or coquetry."

"If I am really free from those failings, I can readily explain the cause. I have no small passions ; they are all swallowed up in the one master-feeling which has complete dominion of my head, my heart, my soul."

"And what is that ?"

"Aha ! Camillo mio ! would you have me reveal my secret ? Not yet, not yet ; though I may perhaps divulge it to you before I leave England. Of this be assured, that when I do return to Italy I shall carry

with me my own respect, a conscience free from reproach, whatever may be thought of me by others. But you must be tired of all this egotism,—and if not, I am. Come, shall I sing to you? Giddy creature that I am! Hark at my three musical clocks all tuning up together to remind me that I have an engagement in Langham Place.”

“And to afford me the hope that I may be allowed to escort you.”

“May all your hopes be as surely and as speedily accomplished!”

“I am never tired,” said Allan, as they pursued their walk, “of admiring this noble promenade, so varied and yet so striking in its whole range from Waterloo Place to the Regent’s Park. How immeasurably superior to the barrack-like uniformity of the older streets! The Duke of York’s column, however, ought to have been fluted, and ought not to have been *his*. If it means to assert that he performed anything entitling him to the honour of surmounting it, we can only pronounce (as was once said of its brother on Fish Street Hill) that

it 'lifts the head, and lies.' To bestow such a distinction on such a man is an architectural immorality, a public wrong,—unless, indeed, it may be defended on the principle that unmerited eminence, like praise undeserved, 'is censure in disguise.' ”

“Perhaps that may be the Duke's own opinion,” smiled Isola, “for you see he turns his back upon us as if he were ashamed to show his face. Yes, I agree with you, there is a beauty, a brilliancy, an expansiveness about this promenade that always charms me. If it was said of ancient Tyre that her merchants were princes, may we not pronounce the shopkeepers of Regent Street to be peers? All the wealth of the four quarters of the world seems poured into it. Look at this window:—how beautiful are these shawls, and what low prices are affixed to them! Nay; I will not stop,—there's nothing so expensive as cheapness; it tempts you to buy, and, as I told you before, I am a money-scraper, not a money-spender. I like, nevertheless, to watch the gazers at the different windows, and the expression of

their countenances ; it gives an insight into character."

" Mark, Isola, yonder handsome girl,—with what an intense yearning she gloats upon that expensive shawl !"

" Poor creature ! she has evidently been led into temptation, and I trust she will be delivered from evil, for there may be eventual shame and suicide in that covetous look."

" Was it not an Athenian saying, that the man who had the fewest wants came the nearest to the gods, who had none ?"

" And was it not the Stoics who maintained that the best way to gratify, or rather to prevent your wants, was to suppress your desires, which some wag has compared to the pleasant process of cutting off your legs that you may not require boots ? Certain it is, that if we had no ungratified desires we should have a much less vivid enjoyment of existence ; for hope is often sweeter than reality. For myself I can answer that my greatest present pleasure is the anticipation of a joy to come."

" The delight, in short, of returning to

Italy. Ah, Isola! I cannot share with you in that! Well, I must submit to my fate. Some one says that we may all have what we like by liking what we have; and upon that principle the present moment may perhaps be the happiest of my life, for am I not walking on a fine day, in one of the finest and most amusing streets in Europe, with Isola Bella by my side?"

"Beware, Camillo! It has hitherto been the greatest charm of your society that you have never attempted to flatter me. If you begin to pay me compliments, I shall fancy you are like other men, which, I can assure you, would be no small disadvantage to you. Look at these beautiful horses and splendid carriages, collected opposite a shop-window, whose whole wide expanse, gorgeous and sparkling with gold and jewels, is only protected from the forlorn paupers or daring rogues who gaze at them outside by a piece of glass which a blow would shiver, but which protects them as effectually as if it were an impenetrable wall of brass. Surely this is the very triumph of civilisation."

“And police.”

“Which is the same thing. We, laugh at the shipwrecked voyager who was so highly gratified at discovering a gibbet where he was washed ashore; but he was right, for it showed him that there were securities for life and property, which is everything.”

“Yet it is painful, to me at least, to see the two extremes of wealth and poverty brought together, almost into contact,—as at this gold and jewel flashing window, for instance.”

“Nay; these are superfluities—idle luxuries, of which the poor scarcely know the use, and with which the wealthy might well dispense. But look ye here, Camillo! behold these young chimney-sweepers; how ravenously they devour with their eyes the rolls in that pastry-cook’s window, while the lounging epicures within are endeavouring to provoke their palled appetites by some stimulating confection.”

“Poor little wretches!” said Allan, slipping some money into their hands,—“they

shall feast more than their eyes this morning."

"I have seen nothing in England," resumed Isola, "which fills me with a deeper compassion than the sight of these poor Pariahs and outcasts of society. Ungrateful people that you are! these imps of darkness are your Lares and Penates, your household gods, the guardians of your hearths, the dispensers of comfort and safety to your cherished fire-sides. The very soot that begrimes, and often subjects them to disease, comes from the fires which have roasted your venison, heated your turtle-soup, cheered and enlivened your social circles; and in reward for services which involve constant toil and suffering, and occasional risk of life, you give them a year's destitution with a single May-day's Saturnalia. How you English, who are such preachers of charity and emancipation, can employ these poor victims, when you might safely accomplish the same object by machinery, I cannot understand."

"People are used to the employment of

these boys, and do not advert to their sufferings."

"Ah! custom and thoughtlessness are the old excuses for cruelty and oppression. But here I am at my journey's end; this is the house I am to call at. Thanks and farewell for the present, and do not forget your promise to meet me at the rehearsal."

"It is little likely to escape my recollection. I will wait for you at the door of the Opera-house."

When Allan had an hour or two to spare, he generally devoted them to a ramble in one or other of the Parks, which, by their amplitude, their verdant beauty, and the noble views they commanded, constituted, in his opinion, the most striking feature and the greatest embellishment of the metropolis. He was making his way towards Hyde Park, after having parted from Isola, when in Oxford Road he was saluted with the exclamation, "Ah! Allan Latimer, my jolly freshman! I am glad to see you. How fare you?—what tidings of Isola?—which way are you wending? *N'importe*. I'm going

your way, whatever it may be." And ere Allan could give any answer to this string of interrogatories, he found himself walking arm-in-arm with Harry Freeman, to whom he had been introduced by Isola at her last party, and who had kindly volunteered to act as his Cicerone about London,—an offer of which he had already availed himself, and had been much pleased with his companion.

Harry, who was of no profession, might perhaps be best described as a *chap* about town; —a pleasant, lively, rattling *poco-curante*. Though young and handsome, he was utterly free from coxcombry or vanity; but, on the other hand, although a gentleman by birth and education, his manners and language were sometimes vulgar from an affectation of low buffoonery, slang terms, and ungrammatical language. Passionately fond of singing, and with a voice that could accommodate itself with ease to the most difficult operatic music or the broadest comic song from an English pantomime, he was equally at home in all games, all sports, all

recreations, whether social or solitary, rural or civic, high or low, indoors or out of doors, making himself universally welcome by his good humour and his animal spirits, neither of which had ever been known to fail him. When he affected the language, he generally assumed the look, voice, and gestures of the vulgar, all of which he could imitate to perfection. In this, however, as in almost everything else, the outward and the inner man were antitheses to each other; and it was happily said of him that the only character which he never mimicked, and yet never forgot, was that of a gentleman. "You're a precious lucky dog, Latimer!" said Harry, who was as free and easy with his companion as if he had known him for years; "you're in high favour with the Signora, I can tell you that; and there are lots of prime swells in London, top-sawyers, fellows with strawberry-leaves round their coronets, who would give their ears to stand in your shoes."

"I am highly flattered by the Signora's good opinion, but I am not aware that I

have done anything to deserve it," said Allan, slightly colouring.

"Well, if you've not, you needn't look like the red lion of Brentford. Confound it! I wish I could blush, though they tell me I did look deuced red when I was had up for that lark at Knightsbridge, and I have ever since had the nickname of the Lobster, because I only turn red when I get into hot water. I spun a regular yarn—had a precious long palaver with the Signora about you yesterday. 'It is such a treat,' she exclaimed,—you know her way of speaking," pursued Freeman, pursing up his mouth and endeavouring to imitate the sweet and gracious tones of the Italian;—"it is such a treat to me, who am constantly beleaguered with *roués* and *blasés*, men of the town, dandies and debauchees,—palled, and jaded, and insolent creatures, who have worn out their head and heart, and retain nothing but the worst of their senses—it is such a treat to encounter, in a young man who is handsomer and cleverer than the best of them, a fresh, and pure, and unso-

phisticated spirit—one that is yet unspoiled by the pleasures and vices of London—one who is modest and diffident, though his attainments might well make him vain—a man who can admire me, and yet be afraid to confess it—who, when others are seeking to cajole me by their insidious flattery, can stand apart and blush!—and such a phoenix of a man is Mr. Latimer.’ There, my fine fellow! learnt her speech all by heart on purpose for you. I harn’t spelled sich a long lesson afore since I left school.”

“And don’t you think the Signora is rather inconsistent to say I am not vain, while she is thus taking the most effectual means to make me so?” asked Allan, with an assumed carelessness, while his whole frame thrilled with pleasure, not unmixed with a touch of jealous curiosity, as he continued—“But surely you yourself must share her good opinion, since you thus possess her confidence?”

“Oh! she chats familiarly with me, because she knows me to be a safe fellow. I have such a regard for the sex in general

that I never flirt with one in particular. I'm rather a queer fish, a rum cove. I play all games, but never for money—attend race-courses, but never bet—lounge in at gaming-houses, but only to look on—talk politics, and don't care a button about them—possess lots of acquaintance (you among the number), but am rather shy of friendships, for friends are always quarrelling; and what's stranger still, and makes Harry Freeman a phoenix, a *rara avis*, a white swan among the black ones, though my income is small, I never exceeds it, and never owes nobody nothink in the whole wide world."

"Which, amid so many temptations, shows you to be a man of high principle."

"Don't you be such a flat, such a pancake, such a greenhorn as to fancy that. Principle! deuce a bit. Interest, my hearty; nothing else upon earth. In the choice of evils, I had rather live upon my income than be bothered with duns—that's all. There are two things of which I am particularly fond—singing, and the personal ease of a certain Harry Freeman; but my hobby-

horse—my prime swell—my trump card—my bang-up topper in the way of enjoyment, is a certain noun-substantive—namely, life by itself—life !”

“ You seem to have everything, indeed, to make it happy.”

“ Ay, and I should make it happy, or rather it would make me happy, without anything.”

“ A pleasant system of philosophy.”

“ Rather say a lucky organisation—a good digestion, a healthy frame, a devil-may-care disposition.”

“ I wish I could make a similar boast,” said Allan with a sigh.

“ What do you sigh for? I hate a fellow that indulges in ‘windy suspiration of forced breath,’ even though he may be thinking of the beautiful Signora. But harkye, my fine fellow, my would-be *cavaliere servente*—you may be the Signora’s fancy-man, and she may like you for blushing and playing mumchance, and so forth ; but if you think to obtain any further favours you’ll find yourself catawampously stumped, as the

Yankees say. For correctness and character and all that sort of thing, she's a trump-card, and no mistake—a perfect Diana—(no, that won't do, I forgot Endymion, and half a dozen others)—quite a Lucretia or Virginia.”

“Do you then imagine it possible,” asked Allan rather indignantly “that I could be base enough to dream, even for a single moment——”

“Nay, nay, don't flare up, my touchy Congreve rocket! I imagine nothing, except that it is a friendly act to put you on your guard, to give you a *carte du pays*, as you confess that you're rather a Johnny Raw in London. Why, the Duke of Keswick offered her *carte blanche*, settlement, house, carriage, jewels, everything, and a precious shindy she kicked up; made old Antonio bundle him out of the house neck and crop. Then there's that old foxy humbug Lord Holloway always following her on the sly, and making her fine presents; and that drawling dandy fool young Cavendish, thinking to make sure of his Danaë because

he can visit her in a shower of gold. She'll take the sparklers and the tin, for everything is fish that comes to her net; but as to the flats, they'll find themselves done, done as brown as the toast that was made of Tom Brown's brown bread, or my name isn't Harry Freeman: that's my vardict, and therefore I says it."

Thus chatting together they crossed Hyde Park, Freeman, who seemed to know everybody and everything, acting as cicerone, and finally conducting Allan to Tattersall's, as it was settling-day for an extra race that had been got up by some amateurs of the turf. Here the free-and-easy Harry appeared to be quite at home, nodding with the same good-humoured smile and familiar "How are you?" to a duke or a jockey. While he was engaged in conversation with a little knot of friends, Allan's attention was caught by a soft voice whose peculiarly winning accents were familiar to his ear, though he could not immediately recall where he had heard them, nor did his memory serve him when he took a leisurely survey of the

speaker, a rather light-built, but compact and well-formed man, fashionably dressed, and courteous in his demeanour. A sudden turn of the head, however, having revealed to him a portion of a scar, imperfectly concealed by the whiskers, he recognised instantly the fellow-passenger of the stage-coach, whom he had so strongly suspected of being identical with the mysterious monk, and who had now added a pair of mustachios to his face. Delighted with this discovery, and impatient to gratify his curiosity, he was about to make application to his friend, when the stranger, lounging up to the spot where he was standing, exclaimed with a bland look and voice, "Good morning, Freeman." Without uttering a syllable, or in any way recognising the salutation, the party thus addressed fixed his eyes steadily upon the speaker, with an expression of indignant wonder that occasioned him to wheel lazily round, and saunter to another quarter, humming an air with a well-acted nonchalance as he retreated.

"Curse that fellow's impudence!" ex-

claimed Freeman; "to think of his addressing me—and at Tattersall's too!"

"Who is he—what is he?" eagerly asked Allan.

"He calls himself Captain Harcourt, but how he came by his commission or his aristocratic name, unless he purloined them, I really cannot tell you. I rather suspect that the Captain occasionally indulges in an alias. I can only tell you what *I* call him—namely—a scamp, a blackleg, a clever swindler, who knows just enough of the law to keep tolerably clear of its clutches, though he has been kicked off a racecourse more than once as a common cheat, and out of gaming-houses as a notorious rook and raff. I have heard that he formerly travelled to fairs with a gambling-booth of his own—I myself have only seen him when he has been enacting the man of fashion at races, prize-fights, and public entertainments."

"But how came you acquainted with such a character?"

"By not knowing it—the fellow's manners are so plausible and even insinuating, his

appearance so gentlemanly, his voice so winning, that I suffered him to cheat me at Newmarket in the sale of a spavined horse, a regular screw, on the strength of which he claimed my acquaintance ; but as soon as I twigged that he was a flashman—one of the swell mob, I mizzled—gave him the cut direct. Spite of his wheedling ways the cove has lots of brass, but I never thought he would have come it so strong as to show his mug at Tattersall's ; still less that he would venture upon such a saucy start as to tip me a ' Good morning, Freeman.' ”

Allan related the story of the stranger who had intruded himself into Chubbs's market-cart, and his reasons for suspecting that this Captain Harcourt was the same person as the apparent monk. “ I should have thought it much more probable that he would have stolen a valuable gold watch, than have left it behind him,” said Freeman.. “ No —no—you're on the wrong sniff there. The Captain 's not such a flat, depend on't, as to drop his swag into a bunch of turnips. But enough of him and his dirty tricks. Faugh !

I want an ounce of civet to sweeten my imagination, and so, as we stroll back towards the Opera House, I will talk to you of nothing but your fascinating friend, ay, and mine too, the beautiful Isola. How beautifully she sang that cavatina t'other night out of the Tancredi—and that charming aria out of the second act, the '*Giusto Ciel, che umile adoro!*' Hang me if she isn't a regular bang-up angel, and that's just the long and the short of the matter, and so—come on, Macduff!"

CHAPTER VII.

ALLAN had not yet been to the Opera, an entertainment of which he had heard so much, and had anticipated so great a treat from visiting it, that even a morning sight of the interior of the building, accompanied by Isola, presented itself to his imagination with a deep and undefinable sort of interest. A morning rehearsal, and a first rehearsal too, is perhaps the least attractive point of view in which any theatre or any performers can be contemplated, and it need excite little wonder, therefore, that Allan's earliest operatic impressions were those of grievous disappointment. After passing through a low and long passage, partially illumined by a few straggling lamps, and following his conductor through side-scenes rudely daubed

over with figures, trees, and buildings, which the doubtful light would not allow him to discriminate, he emerged upon the stage, and gazed out upon a dim mysterious-looking hall, which wore the appearance of a vast subterranean cave or sepulchre.

The glimmering glass of the unlighted lustres deepened rather than dispersed the gloom; occasional voices of workmen or others, issuing from unseen recesses, echoed through the empty dome with an indistinct and unearthly sound; the vacant boxes, with their covered cushions and reversed draperies, looked dismal as the unoccupied cells of a catacomb; while the figures who had seated themselves in two or three parts of the lower tier, wore a strange and spectral aspect. Some of the band were in the orchestra, and, as the stage-lamps were partially lighted, Allan was enabled to discern more accurately the objects that surrounded him, which were not of a nature to obliterate his first feeling of disappointment. Everything appeared so dirty, coarse, and tawdry, that he could hardly believe himself to be

in the London Opera House, of whose surpassing magnificence and refined taste he had heard and read such glowing accounts.

He gazed upwards, and saw suspended from the ceiling, threatening destruction to all below if their sustaining ropes should break, rocks, woods, and mountains, triumphal cars, fragments of carpentry, grinning monsters, altars, temples, gods and goddesses of different mythologies, all hanging together in complicated, but peaceful confusion. Nor was the scene below, as the performers successively arrived, a whit more consistent. Norma, which had not previously been acted by the present company, was the opera to be rehearsed. After many a note of preparation, and sundry curses from the stage-manager, coupled with repeated shouting of names, and threats of fining the absentees, the Gallic army, represented by six workmen bustling in all the martial panoply of paper caps, shirt-sleeves, and dirty brown-holland aprons, marched across the stage, when the chief priest of the Druids, dressed in a mackintosh coat, a

bandana handkerchief, and splashed boots, took a pinch of snuff, removed the cigar from his mouth, and commenced the rehearsal by chanting a summons to the subordinate priests, who, in full chorus, called upon the moon to be quick in rising, which reminded the stage-manager to call out, "Jem Hopkins ! see that the new lamp for the full moon is got ready, and tell Smithers to mend the thunder—the box is broken."

The Proconsul of the Romans, a celebrated warrior, next walked upon the stage, and taking off his clogs, his gloves, and his spencer, and folding up his umbrella, expressed a hope that he had not caught cold, as he had wetted his foot in running away from a dog, an animal of which he had always felt a peculiar dread;—after which he marched up to the foot-lamps without flinching, and sang as if he bade an equal defiance to catarrhs and catastrophes. Meanwhile the vestal priestesses—several of whom were in an interesting situation that promised an addition to the company—were

cracking nuts and jokes with the bards and priests, and indulging in fun and foolery on the subject of a pot of porter, which the sacred choir were discussing, until it was time to come forward and sing a hymn, during the performance of which they looked becomingly demure and devout. Even Isola, with her elegant morning dress and Leghorn bonnet of the last new fashion, presented, to Allan's eye, a most anomalous appearance as Norma, the Druidess. Nor was he less disappointed by her performance on this occasion, for after making every allowance for the embarrassment natural to the assumption of a new character, he could not help thinking that her singing and her acting were equally spiritless and ineffective, and he left the house with a determination never again to give himself the trouble of witnessing a rehearsal.

Little had Allan Latimer suspected, while walking home from the dinner-party at the Lum's, that he had continued to engross the sole attention of those young ladies long after his own disappearance, and the depart-

ure of the Snaggs and Popkins visitants. Huddled together in one of the bed-rooms, and too eagerly engaged to think of undressing, they all conjointly chanted his praises, each wishing to make it appear that she had been honoured with his particular and exclusive preference. "I found him a most delightful companion at dinner," observed Priscilla; "so attentive! he passed the mustard-pot to me twice, merely because I happened to say that I wouldn't give a farthing for boiled beef without it. One thing was still more pointed. I had called three times for bread, but Sally and the boy were both too busy to attend to me, when he said, with a tender look that I shall never forget, 'I have enough for both, and I shall be most happy if you will share my portion with me!'"

"And what of that?" sneered the jealous Amelia; "he couldn't do less. I suppose you thought it was a declaration of love."

"Depend upon it she considers it a regular pop. Hadn't you better speak to Pa, dear 'Cilla?" asked Harriet with a horse-laugh.

"Don't *you* talk, bo'son," retorted the elder sister; "flouncing down into the chair as you did, quite close to him, and throwing yourself into such an attitude."

"So she did," echoed Amelia; "and flirting with him at the tea-table too, when he evidently wanted to talk to me. However, I didn't care, for I had enough to do to attend to Nic Popkins, whose devoirs were very marked."

"And I'm sure *I* needn't care," resumed Priscilla, "for after he left us I went down to the parlour and found the toothpick which Mr. Latimer had dropped at dinner."

"La, 'Cilla! do you mean to use it?" inquired Amelia.

"I shouldn't mind it, for I never saw anything so clean and beautiful as his teeth; but I shall return it, of course. Ma and I can call for the purpose. It would be dreadfully shabby to keep it."

"Oh, my! How honest you've become all of a sudden!" sneered Amelia.

"And why of a sudden, Miss Wasp? Wasn't I always so?" Again the conver-

sation reverted to Allan's figure, dress, deportment, and conversation—a subject so inexhaustible, that the clock struck twelve while they were yet discussing it.

“Lauk!” exclaimed Harriet, “I do declare it's midnight! Not that I care, for I don't believe in ghosts; but *did* you read that account in the ‘Morning Post,’ of the apparition that appeared at Gravesend? That *must* be true, for it was all in black and white. There were three old ladies sitting together, as we may be now,—only we're young, you know; it was Sunday night, and one of them was reading aloud a poem called the ‘Devil's Walk,’ when, just as they had finished”——At this moment a simultaneous scream burst from the three sisters, for the door opened, and a spectral-looking figure stalked slowly into the room. Their terrors, however, were allayed almost as soon as excited, for the apparition was presently discovered to be no other than Jemima, who, having just awoke, and hearing their voices, walked into the chamber in her night-gear, to inquire the cause of so late a

conference. All three now fell foul of the poor spectre for frightening them, and in the midst of their wrangling, "Druidicus," putting his gaunt night-capped head out of his bed-room door, called up the stairs—"Girls! how dare you be making such a disturbance?—what *is* the matter?"

"Nothing," replied Amelia: "Jemima happened to frighten us sadly, that's all; but we are going to bed immediately."

"And what on earth has kept you up so late? Surely you have not got the last number of the magazine up stairs?"

"Yes we have, Pa!" replied the sly Amelia, winking at her sisters; "and we have been reading aloud your charming paper on the mistletoe."

"Well, well, go to bed directly, now that you have finished it. I cannot and will not allow such late hours. It is fortunate you didn't awake your mother."

Although Jemima returned on the following morning to her ringlets and her romance, she neither recovered her spirits nor her temper, for she had deemed herself most

grievously ill-used in the whole affair of the dinner-party. If her sisters, however, had seen more of Allan Latimer at the time, she comforted herself with the reflection that she might think more of him afterwards. As it is well known that the thoughts of heroines are privileged to arrange themselves into spontaneous and unpremeditated stanzas of the most elaborate construction, it is little marvel that Jemima's pencil, which had been accustomed to draw patterns for embroidered collars, should quite unconsciously sketch a likeness of the object uppermost in her thoughts, whenever a piece of blank paper was placed beneath her fingers. A smile of peculiar satisfaction at her own performance having excited one morning the suspicion of Amelia, she crept on tiptoe to the table, and suddenly exclaimed—"Oh, 'Cilla! Oh, Harriet! here's fun! here's a discovery! Jemy has been attempting to draw a head of Mr. Latimer!"

"That I haven't!" cried the blushing delinquent, hastily adding an animal's body to the neck, and clapping four legs

to the body;—"I was trying to draw a cow."

"Then I can only say," cried Priscilla, "that the cow is guilty of a base plagiarism in combing back the hair upon its forehead, and tying its cravat so exactly like Allan Latimer's." The sisterly burst of laughter that followed this sally so provoked the fair culprit, that she pettishly tore her drawing into little bits, which she threw into the faces of her accusers.

Deprived of this solace, poor Jemima became more moping and lackadaisical than ever, and as her mother knew her to be rather a weak-minded girl, who gave way to all sorts of nonsensical romance when not occupied, she was glad to employ her in making an inventory of the furniture, books, and effects of a handsome house in Russell Square, which had been placed in Mr. Lum's hands for sale.

High and unbounded as was the favour now enjoyed by Allan Latimer in this family, he was doomed—so uncertain, alas! are all sublunary honours and distinctions—

not only to lose their good opinion still more rapidly than he had attained it, but to be looked on as a monster of duplicity by the very parties who had so recently been crying him up to the skies and contending for his smiles. Some friend having presented tickets to Miss Lum and her brother, they went to a public concert at which Signora Guardia was to sing, and there, to their utter consternation and amazement, they beheld Allan Latimer, the son of the lady who kept a carriage, and the heir of the rich old merchant, doing duty as one of the band. Having ascertained that their eyes had not deceived them, they concluded that his appearance might have been a freak, he might be only performing as an amateur ; but on application to one of the clarionet players, with whom Tom was slightly acquainted, he was apprised that the delinquent attended in a professional capacity, that he was paid for his exertions, and moreover that he was a regular teacher of the violoncello. Misfortunes never come singly. The next morning's post brought a

letter to "Druidicus," who had written to an acquaintance at Woodcote on the subject of Allan, informing him that he had wantonly quarrelled with the rich old merchant, who had dismissed and disowned him, and that he had clandestinely run away from home, after having behaved in a very scandalous way to a charming girl, whose affections he had won under the pretext of an honourable courtship. And that such a wretch should dare to intrude himself into such a respectable family as the Lums! and evidently with the same intentions too, for each of the four sisters claimed him as a decided, though not a declared suitor. It was the very acmé of enormity. A false-hearted runaway!—a pauper!—a fiddler! was successively ejaculated by three of the sisters; but the tender-hearted Jemima rather objected to the latter word as a term of reproach, observing with a sigh—"How beautiful that white hand must look when performing! And if he does play upon the fiddle, it's not a common one; you said yourself, dear 'Cilla, that it was a very large one!"

"Tom!" exclaimed Harriet, whose boat-swain's spirit was aroused, "you ought to fight the fellow."

"Well, and I shouldn't mind it"—replied the brother—"if I were to put myself in training for a month under Joe Simmons."

"Why, you don't think I mean fisticuffs, do you? No, you ought to hire a pistol, and challenge him."

"Oh! my service to you: I know a trick worth two of that. Those scamps are always good shots, and I've no fancy whatever for a bullet in the thorax."

"It was a fraudulent act, my dear Mrs. L.," sighed "Druidicus," who had just been paying last week's bills, "to put us to the expense of that dinner; nay, I may say a swindling act, for it was obtaining another man's goods under false pretences; but our most proper course is to take no notice of him unless he should call, in which case I shall know how to dismiss him with a becoming dignity. I will let him see that a distinguished writer in the Antiquarian

Magazine is not a person to be insulted with impunity."

A few days after this colloquy Allan Latimer, little dreaming of the reception that awaited him, presented himself in Great Russell Street, when Tom, thinking he might be called on to assist in a forcible ejection, happened to recollect that he had an appointment with Nic Popkins, and ran off to the Museum, as if in great apprehension of being too late. Mrs. Lum kept purposely out of the way, assigning as a reason—"that it was a subick she didn't ought to interfere in;—that it made the blood bile in her veins; and she feared, if she saw him, she might give him sich a blowing-up as would derange her stomach, for she was always indigestible when she got into a passion." Allan was, therefore, consigned to the father alone, while two of the girls listened at the drawing-room door, and two others looked over the banisters from above to watch his exit. After the complainant had pompously delivered himself of a long speech, which he had learnt by heart for

the occasion, Allan, all amazement at the charges brought against him without even a shadow of foundation, would have entered on his defence; but as the indignant "Druidicus" not only refused to hear him, but bade him quit the house, and never darken his doors again, he made his bow, and left the apartment hastily dispersing the listeners in his exit, and saluted, as he reached the passage below, by a quadruple hiss from the upper floor.

Allan would have felt indignant at this unceremonious dismissal, had not the charges brought against him appeared so truly absurd and preposterous that they rather provoked contempt and laughter than any enduring wrath. In losing the society of such a family there was little to regret, but he was annoyed at having incurred even their unmerited enmity, and was therefore doubly gratified when he was shortly furnished with an opportunity of returning good for evil by rendering them an essential service.

It has been stated that Jemima had been deputed to take an inventory of all the

goods, chattels, plate, books, and other effects of a handsome house in Russell Square, during the intervals of which occupation she amused herself by an occasional stroll in the enclosure of the square, feeding her imagination with the pastoral images suggested by the brown grass and forlorn-looking trees, and only regretting that she could conjure up no shepherd to recreate her with his pipe—no knight, cavalier, or other hero to whisper tales of love, or to bear her off upon his palfrey to the rose-encircled altar of Hymen. What, then, was her delight, while plunged in one of these reveries, to behold a figure approaching whose frogged and tasselled military coat, whose whiskered and mustachoed cheek, whose graceful walk, and whose distinguished air proclaimed at once the soldier and the gentleman! After looking at him through her ringlets as he passed, she cast her eyes demurely upon the ground, walked on, turned round when she reached the boundary of the enclosure, and finding, as the stranger had done exactly the same, that they were again about to meet,

she called up the prettiest look of confusion and embarrassment which could possibly be summoned at so very short a notice. It may well be imagined that this becoming agitation was not diminished when the stranger, politely bowing, exclaimed in a voice and manner of the most winning suavity—"I beg your pardon for the liberty I am taking, but will you allow me to remind you that the grass is damp, and that, if you wear thin shoes, you may be running some risk of catching cold."

"Thank you, Sir; but I always wear double-soled shoes, and I never catch cold," was the rather unromantic reply. Her companion was delighted to hear it, and again, in deprecating strains, implored her forgiveness for having presumed to address her. Nor were his supplications vain, for Jemima, immeasurably delighted at finding herself thus *tête-à-tête* with a *bonâ fide* mustachoeed officer, became every moment less and less disposed to be inexorable, as she discovered that his eyes were soft and gentle as his voice, his manners insinuating,

his discourse that of a remarkably clever man, for he talked of nothing but her beauty, her ringlets, and his own good fortune in having accidentally encountered so charming, so fascinating a person. With that frankness which is so characteristic of a soldier, he then informed her that he was a Captain in the army, a man of high family, that he had served in General Evans's Legion in Spain, where he had received a wound, and that being a single man and in independent circumstances, he had some thought of travelling for a few months, though he might perhaps be induced, after all, to settle permanently in England. As such a spontaneous confidence justified a little curiosity in return, he put a few questions to Jemima, who, not thinking it necessary to make any admissions that might tend to terminate an acquaintance so auspiciously commenced and so exceedingly desirable, contented herself with stating that she resided in the Square, pointing at the same time to the handsomest house it contained. After a long and rather a tender colloquy, consider-

ing it was a first one, she took her leave, having previously mentioned, by mere chance, that she was accustomed to walk in the enclosure every day at the same hour. Observing that the stranger watched her to the door, she gave a consequential knock, as if she was the proprietor of the mansion, swept in with a dignified air, hurried up stairs, and threw herself upon a sofa, in a state of fluttering and joyous excitement such as she had never before experienced.

Possessing much of that cunning which is often the most strongly developed in the weakest-minded people, rendered flighty by the romances she had read, and justifying herself by the dictum that in love and war all stratagems are fair, Jemima now began a course of deception which a wiser head might have been puzzled either to devise or to execute with equal ingenuity and success. In their subsequent interviews at the same place of rendezvous she represented herself as an orphan living with her uncle, who was at present in Gloucestershire, looking after her estate, and preparing "the Hall" for her

reception, as she would shortly attain the age of twenty-one, and meant thenceforward to reside in the country.

"You said *the Hall*," whispered the Captain in a tone of tender inquiry. "Is it your own? and is it, like yourself, handsome?"

"It is my own," replied Jemima demurely, as if she wished to disclaim all merit on that account—"and it certainly is rather a fine place. Built in the Elizabethan style—(her memory and the last romance here supplied her with a ready-made mansion, which she determined to build on a handsome scale, since it was to cost her nothing,)—with embattled coping, a tower at one corner surmounted by a crocketed spire, and projecting casemented windows, its quadrangular form imparts to it a rather heavy appearance, which, however, is amply compensated by the capaciousness, I might almost say the grandeur, of its interior arrangements. Lofty and antique, the Hall opens upon a terrace decorated with statues and shaded at each extremity by a lofty cypress, whence a flight of marble steps

leads to the gardens, laid out in the formal style of Louis the Fourteenth. I am well aware that this style has its admirers, but I am free to confess that I myself prefer a more simple and natural character in gardening; and as to those gloomy old cypresses, I am determined, as soon as I am mistress of the place, to have them cut down."

"Doubtless," observed the Captain with an air of perfect unconcern—"there are lands attached to the Hall, which bring in a handsome revenue."

"Not above two or three thousand a year at present, but my uncle says the farms are underlet, and he means to see about raising the rents, in which I hope he will succeed, for I have no other property except the house in Russell Square." This ingenious declaration was unnecessary; she had said quite enough. As the Captain happened at that moment to be labouring under a severe attack of impecuniosity, and had consequently no time to lose, he made love to his fair innamorata at full gallop, and as the heroine of the ringlets and romance had nearly

completed her inventory of the house, and would only have a few days left for the completion of the adventure, she was in as great a hurry to accept, as the Captain was to offer his hand.

Eager and impassioned as he pretended to be, and penniless as he really was, a latent misgiving haunted the mind of the lover, who, finding it difficult to believe that so great an heiress, and so great a simpleton, should be thus thrown, unsought, into his arms, intimated a wish to be introduced to the aunt, which would enable him, he thought, to judge for himself. This was a startling proposition, but as Jemima was not going to lose a mustachod man of family and fortune almost as soon as she had found him, her cunning, quickened by her wishes, soon enabled her to surmount the difficulty. The house being in the charge of an old man and his wife, who were easily prevailed upon by a small gratuity to become her confederates, she took from the wardrobe of the deceased lady to whom it had belonged, a handsome dress with appro-

priate ornaments, in which she arrayed the dame, while the husband, tricked out for the nonce in a showy livery, did duty as porter. All the other servants were stated to be at the Hall, preparing it for her reception.

These preliminaries being arranged, the Captain was introduced into the house, which he found expensively furnished and appointed; and to the pretended aunt, who supported her own character and that of her niece with a due dignity. Jemima, she observed, was not only an heiress, but a very sweet girl, and it was not to be supposed that her uncle, whose return was daily expected, would suffer her to bestow her hand upon any one whose character and circumstances would not bear the strictest investigation. Though the Captain's doubts were now dispelled, his fears of the uncle were increased, especially when Jemima despondingly admitted that he was very particular and very cross.

"Why, then," demanded the suitor, "should we not fly at once from tyranny and

wretchedness, to liberty and love? The railroad will speed us towards Gretna Green, and when we are once united, we may defy uncles, fate, and fortune, and devote the remainder of our lives to happiness unalloyed." Jemima, concealing with the greatest difficulty her unbounded delight at the success of her manœuvres, affected to give an unwilling consent. The following morning was appointed for their flight, and the Captain handed her from a hackney-coach to the railroad-station precisely at the moment when Allan Latimer reached the same spot, in one of his promenades to visit the different lions of the metropolis. "Miss Jemima with Captain Harcourt!" he exclaimed, gazing with astonishment at the latter, upon whose arm she was familiarly leaning: "Will you allow me to inquire whether you are acquainted with this person?"

"Yes, Sir," replied the damsel pertly; "and I know him to be a true-hearted man and a gentleman, and not a breaker of his vows, as you are."

"I very much doubt it. Let me implore

you to be on your guard, for I have reason to believe that your companion is no better than he should be—in fact, that he is an adventurer and a sharper.”

“Damnation, Sir!” ejaculated the Captain, darting an eat-him-up-alive look at Allan—“do you mean to apply these terms to me?”

“I do, Captain Harcourt!” was the reply; “and I beg to add, that I am not to be bullied either by big words or angry looks. If I have been misinformed, I shall be happy to recall them. In the mean time there is my card, if you wish to know who it is that claims the right to advise, and, if necessary, to protect this lady.”

“But she has placed herself under my protection, and you will interfere between us at your peril.”

“I shall do so, nevertheless, until I have ascertained that her present proceeding is sanctioned by her parents.”

“Parents, Sir!—she has none: she is an orphan and an only child.”

“What strange delusion is this? She is

the daughter of Mr. Jonas Lum, a respectable house-agent in Great Russell Street, and has a mother living, besides a brother and three sisters."

"House-agent! house-agent!" muttered the Captain, letting go the arm of his companion, as his thoughts reverted to the mansion in Russell Square "Jemima! dearest Jemima! you hear what this audacious man says: can it be possible that you belong to that horrid family in Great Russell Street?"

"I must confess," sighed Jemima, blushing crimson, as she saw that her detection was inevitable, "that I *have* rather got a father there."

"And in some little degree, perhaps, a mother, and brother, and sisters!" sneered her lover. Her confused silence and downcast looks gave consent to the charge. "But the Hall—the estate in Gloucestershire—is not *that* yours?"

"Not quite—not altogether," stammered the embarrassed girl—"I must confess that—of the two—I have rather not got any estate anywhere; but what signify riches

or estates?—when two fond hearts like ours——”

“Oh, Gammon!” interposed the Captain fiercely—“none of your blarney! Here’s a precious rig! Who would ever have thought that I should be so regularly hocused by such a poodle-headed kid! There’s nothing left for it but to cut my stick!” With these words he spun round upon his heel, and diving among the carriages and carts collected at the station, was out of sight in a twinkling.

“And I sha’n’t run away to Gretna Green, and I sha’n’t have a mustachoeed husband after all,” cried Jemima, bursting into tears.

By communicating to her what he had learnt respecting the pretended Captain, and assuring her that she ought to be most grateful to Heaven for her escape, Allan partially succeeded in calming the deserted damsel, who was now only apprehensive that her flight might be discovered by the family.

“If you are quick in your movements,” said Allan, “that may yet be prevented.

The hackney-coach has not yet been discharged ; return in it immediately, and let me beseech you to take warning from the great peril you have escaped, and not suffer yourself to be again cajoled by an adventurer and a scamp." Without confessing how much of the cajolery, upon the present occasion, was imputable to herself, the forlorn damsel thanked him for his timely interference, reseated herself in the hackney-coach, and wept all the way as she was driven back in "maiden meditation"—but by no means "fancy free"—to the completion of her inventory in Russell Square.

CHAPTER VIII.

“*Mon Doo!*” exclaimed Mrs. Glossop, lifting up her hands and eyes as the poor wounded lunatic was slowly and carefully helped out of the carriage at the door of the Manor-House—“here’s a *coup de grace*—here’s a *misericorde* business. Why, the poor creature’s covered with blood—her teeth are chattering in her head, her clothes are all wringing wet, and she has neither a bonnet nor a shawl : it’s enough to give her a perfect *malapropos*.”

“Come, come,” cried Brown peevishly, “don’t stand there *parlez-vousing*, but bustle about and have a good fire in the yellow room, and get her to bed as fast as you can, and make some of that famous posset immediately. The poor creature is

out of her wits, and, I fear, may have fallen into the river, or met with some accident."

"*Pauvre garçon!*—Only to think. Dear, dear! we have not a moment to lose, for she doesn't seem to *portez vous bien* by any means. Here, Susan! Susan!—tell cook to boil some milk immediately."

"Where's John? where's Trotman?" demanded Brown, pacing up and down the room in a state of great perplexity.

"I saw him this moment running full speed out of the grounds towards the Green."

"Ah! always the same—always out of the way when he's wanted. Did he say where he was going?"

"Not he—when does he ever say anything?"

"Never—except in monosyllables—speaks like a popgun, one pellet at a time. Well—what are you waiting for? I told you to be quick."

"Yes, Sir, but you stopped me just as I was going. Here, Susan, cook, Susan!"

The lunatic meanwhile, who had been placed in the *fauteuil*, with her wounded

arms supported by those of the chair, preserved unbroken the silence which she had maintained in the carriage; but, although she made no complaint, she seemed to be suffering severely from the effects of wet and cold, her whole frame shaking violently, her teeth chattering, and her eyes rolling from side to side with great wildness and rapidity. "Going into a rampant raging fit," muttered Brown, half afraid of being overheard—"See it—know it—feel it—fly at me presently, like a wild cat—hear her sharpening her teeth on purpose—scratch my eyes out in no time—make a salad-bowl of the sockets—fill them up with pepper, mustard, vinegar—perhaps a red-hot coal—maniacs are never particular—no use resisting—strong as twenty men—no doubt she could turn me inside out, like skinning a rabbit, if she tried. No Bedlam neither in the country, where they want it twice as much, for people must be mad indeed to live in it. And that rascal Trotman to run away at the very moment when I wanted to send him for Dawson the apothecary.

Really that fellow's inattention and thoughtlessness are quite——”

A moan from the sufferer, and a slight movement of the chair, converted the completion of the sentence into an exclamation of “Zounds! she's getting her steam up—going to explode—about to make a spring at me!”

Brave as he was under ordinary circumstances, Brown was not free from superstition; and a maniac appeared in his eyes so nearly allied to something supernatural, especially when in a raging state, that he flew to the bell, and continued ringing it with the vigour of great nervous excitement. Mrs. Glossop and two maids soon hastened into the room, the former provided with a warm shawl, which she placed lightly over the strange lady, when she inquired whether they should assist her up stairs, as the bed-room was ready. Their master signified assent, and, to his great comfort, the lunatic, instead of offering any resistance, exhibited a perfect docility, and even seemed thankful for the feeling and con-

siderate way in which they supported her towards the door.

Emboldened by this tranquil demeanour, and anxious to throw off all suspicion of fear from himself, by imputing it, right or wrong, to others, he exclaimed, almost contemptuously, "Don't be frightened, Mrs. Glossop: Susan, what the deuce makes you look so pale?—why, Mary! you seem to tremble. What cowards you all are! The unfortunate lady is as quiet as a lamb.—I have just been travelling with her for miles, and if it hadn't been for her moaning and crying all the way, I should have thought her a very pleasant companion. There—gently! don't touch her arms—slowly up the stairs. Take care of her, Mrs. Glossop, and don't forget the posset."

"An ugly job this," continued the merchant, not sorry to find himself once more alone. "What on earth am I to do with a mad lady in the house? can't manage women when they're in their senses—never could—never tried, that's one good thing. Ha, ha! that's a wipe for the whole sex.

Pretty affair if I can't get rid of her—made keeper of a rural bedlam—stick up a board—'Manor-House mad-house,—by Adam Brown.—N.B. Handcuffs and strait-waist-coats to be sold, on the most reasonable terms, with an allowance to those who take a quantity.' ”

While soliloquising in this half-angry, half-burlesque strain, the door opened, and John Trotman, covered with perspiration and almost breathless from the haste with which he had been running, panted out the words, “Want me, Sir?”

“Yes, sirrah, and so I have for the last half-hour. What the devil do you mean by running out of the way at such a time as this—at the very moment when I wanted to send you for Mr. Dawson, the apothecary?”

“Been there—seen him—coming directly,” was the reply.

“Why, you don't mean to say that you have been all the way to the Green and back in this time?” The servant nodded.

“And who sent you?”

"Nobody—saw the lady was ill—no time to lose—couldn't wait."

"John! you're not such a fool as I thought, and I'm a greater one than I thought."—A respectful bow signified assent to both propositions, when the taciturn Trotman, not wishing, as it would seem, to remain any longer with his self-stultified master, walked panting out of the room.

The apothecary, who soon found his way to the house, gave its owner reason to fear that some time would elapse before he could be got out of it again; for he intimated that, without any reference to the mental malady, upon which he would not for the present venture to give an opinion, he apprehended a tedious if not a serious illness from the exposure to wet and cold, which had struck a perilous chill to the whole system of the patient. Trotman's hasty application being removed, proper bandages were substituted for the wounds in the arm, which were unimportant; a composing-draught and other remedies were administered; every arrangement was made that might contribute to her

comfort ; one of the maids was directed to sit up with her ; the patient, who appeared to be exhausted by previous fatigue and excitement, slept soundly during the remainder of the night, and awoke on the following morning in a much more tranquil though equally dementated state.

An adventure of any sort is so rare a god-send in a quiet and secluded district, that the village of Woodcote might deem itself singularly fortunate in being supplied with a new and still more startling mystery before that of the Monk had received the smallest elucidation or lost any of its interest. Incessant were the inquiries, conjectures, and gossipings elicited by this strange occurrence ; long and frequent were the consultations of friends summoned by Brown to aid him with their counsel, or attracted by their own curiosity, either to obtain a peep at the lunatic, or to pick up some additional topics for tittle-tattle and surmise. Apprehending that the invalid might have escaped from some madhouse, or private receptacle for such patients, it

was Brown's first care to insert advertisements in all the county and local newspapers, describing the dress and personal appearance of the unhappy stranger, the circumstances under which she was first discovered, and the place where she might now be found ; but although these notices were frequently repeated, and every other means resorted to that seemed likely to afford a clue to her history, every perquisition failed, no letter upon the subject was received from any quarter, no applicant appeared.

The object of all this solicitude and curiosity excited the deepest interest in those who had the most frequent opportunities of observing her, for as Dawson's prognostications were fortunately not verified, her bodily health not having undergone any permanent derangement, she was now allowed to walk about the house, always accompanied, however, by one of the maids. Not only was she perfectly quiet and harmless, but she seemed every day to acquire an additional composure ; and, though her faculties remained in the same alienated

state, she would occasionally pore over a book with an evident comprehension of its import, and had been observed to listen to the music of an itinerant band with great apparent pleasure. Only for very short periods, however, could any object or pursuit retain her attention, her thoughts soon relapsed into abstraction or vacancy, her eyes never lost their wild and wandering expression.

Unwilling to trust implicitly to the opinion of the village apothecary, Brown summoned from Cheltenham an eminent practitioner who had paid particular attention to cases of lunacy, engaging him to remain for two or three days at the Manor-House, that he might be the better qualified to form a correct judgment upon the case. It was the deliberate opinion of this gentleman that the patient was not afflicted with hereditary or organic insanity, but that her derangement was the probable result of some violent shock to the nervous system, the effect of which might either be worn out by time, or be abruptly removed by some other vehe-

ment and unexpected excitement, of which latter mode of cure, strange as it might appear, he had known several instances.

Kind and gentle treatment was recommended, with every indulgence calculated to soothe, occupy, or amuse the mind; but as there was reason to apprehend that she had recently been subjected to accesses of violent delirium, which might possibly recur, he desired that she might be always accompanied or kept in sight by some attendant, who should avoid all appearance of restraining her actions, or even of suspecting her sanity. Upon the probable duration of her malady he would not offer an opinion.

“Better and better!” exclaimed Brown, as he fed and dismissed the son of Esculapius. “Nobody can find out who she is or what she is; the doctor can’t tell when she is likely to recover, which may be never, and in the mean time here am I to have the pleasure of maintaining a mad lady in my house, with a maid or keeper to dance attendance at her heels, and some fine moonlight night, as a return for all my kindness,

I may have the pleasure of finding that my grateful patient has burnt my house about my ears, or cut my throat with my own carving-knife."

"My good friend," replied Roger Crab, to whom this Jeremiade was addressed, "it is doubtless an unfortunate affair in every point of view—but in these cases, whatever may be the customs of society, the claims of humanity are paramount. Thank God! I know nothing of law; but even if you are not legally bound to maintain this poor lady, I maintain that you ought to be."

"Pleasant, but wrong! How can you make that out?"

"Listen, and I will tell you. What a fuss and turmoil have lords of the manor and others made about their right to strays and waifs, and *flotson* and *jetson*, whenever there was anything to be gained by them! No want of eager claimants in *that* case. Well, here is a stray and a waif, which, instead of bringing a profit, imposes a trouble and expense—and you are the lord of the manor. If you have a claim to make in one case,

you have a duty to perform in the other. Had it been a treasure-trove, it would have been yours as the finder ; it proves to be a treasure-trove reversed, and the loss, therefore, must be yours."

" Don't care a farthing about the expense—shall maintain her, and take care of her, till I discover her friends, and even if I don't ; but what worries me is the bother, the trouble, the nuisance, the risk, the responsibility.—I wish I knew how a fellow might get rid of all that."

" Nothing in life so easy," cried Captain Molloy, who at this moment swaggered into the room, accompanied by Mrs. Latimer. " Send her to the poor-house, as a vagrant, whose parish can't be found : they will clap a strait waistcoat upon her, shut her up in the infirmary, and there she is, off your hands, as clean as a whistle."

" Heaven forbid ! How can you talk so unfeelingly ?" said Mrs. Latimer, departing for a moment from her usual placid smile and gentle voice. " I know Mr. Brown too well to believe him capable of such con-

duct. No doubt it must be very awkward and distressing to any gentleman to have such an inmate in his house; in fact, she ought to be in charge of some lady, and, if you would let her come to my cottage, there's Allan's bed, you know, and I'm sure I and dear Walter would do everything in our power to——”

“No, no, my good lady,” interposed Brown; “the tree shall lie where it has fallen, and no one shall have charge of her but myself, whatever may be the annoyance. You have most kindly done everything in your power already—been here early and late, and all day long. Have you supplied her with a present wardrobe, as I desired?”

“I have had her own clothes set to rights, and have added what may be immediately required.”

“And what is your opinion,” inquired Crab, “as to the probable position she may have held in society? Having seen so much more of her than anybody else, you are better qualified to form a judgment.”

“That she is a lady I have never enter-

tained a moment's doubt. Not only do her young face, delicate form, and features evince gentle birth, but her gracious and graceful though silent manner of acknowledging my little attentions proves to me that she has been accustomed to good society. Then her clothes were such as no person of inferior station would have worn, and there are costly pearl rings in her ears, to which she seems to attach value, as she loves to examine them before a glass."

"Did I not hear," inquired Crab, "that she had testified pleasure at the music of a passing hand?"

"Yes; and as soon as dear Walter learnt it, he suggested that Ellen should bring her guitar, and there they have been playing and singing to her for more than an hour this morning, and I'm sure I shall never forget it. Ellen, to be sure, does play very sweetly, and nothing can be more touching than Walter's voice when he warbles a plaintive ballad; but to see how the poor lady sat listening with her eyes fixed, and her mouth half open, and her figure motion-

less, as if her whole soul were in her ears! And when Ellen laid down the guitar the poor lady took it up, and played snatches of tunes with a very finished touch of her little white fingers, and sang broken fragments of songs in tones so wild, and so plaintive, and so startling, that it made my very heart ache to hear her. And then she seemed to be trying to recollect some tune, for she began and left off again several times, and looked up to the ceiling, and, finding she could not succeed, she put down the guitar, and shook her head mournfully, and burst into tears. I don't know when I have seen a more distressing sight."

"Oh, then! it's Walter and my Ellen, when they're singing together, that would charm the heart out of your body, like a bird out of a bush," cried Molloy, who now seized every opportunity of puffing these parties in the presence of Adam Brown. "I can answer for my Ellen—kind-hearted creature!—doing everything in her power to comfort the poor mad lady; and as to Walter, there isn't a better fellow in the

whole world ! Somebody told me he talked of leaving us, and embarking in business. Bad luck to the thought of it ! It will be a sad day for all of us when he leaves Woodcote."

" 'That it will indeed, dear boy !' sighed the mother.

" And cannot you gather any information from the lady's discourse ?" inquired Crab, reverting to the previous subject.

" No, indeed ; for she rarely speaks at all, and never more than a very few words coherently. And yet she can read to herself for a short time, and evidently understands what she peruses, for I saw her smile at a French extract from one of Molière's plays—which is another proof that she is a person of education."

" Then there is yet a hope," resumed Crab, " from such glimmerings of intelligence, that with time, and care, and kindness, we may succeed in curing her malady ; and, as friends and neighbours of Mr. Brown, I think we ought not to throw the whole trouble and annoyance upon his shoulders,

but come freely forward, every one of us, and bear our share of the burthen. What say you, Mrs. Latimer?"

"I can answer for myself and Walter—nothing will give us greater pleasure; and with Mr. Brown's permission I will come up to the Manor-House regularly every day."

As a proposal for sharing the burthen sounded, in Molloy's ears, very like undertaking to divide the expense,—a process which, for various reasons, might prove exceedingly inconvenient to him,—he thought it necessary to put in a timely *caveat* by exclaiming, "By the powers! there isn't a more charitable man, though I say it that shouldn't say it, than Charles Sullivan Molloy—that is to say, in my own circle."

"Circle, indeed! for it ends where it begins—namely, at home," muttered Crab, abstractedly tapping the ends of his own fingers, as if he were engaged in some process of mental arithmetic. "This sort of round-robin munificence, this spherical generosity, is the most gratifying of all, for it costs nothing."

“ I am obliged,” pursued the Captain, “ to refuse myself the pleasure of all such donations in England, for I consider the poor of Clognakilty and the County Down to have a prior claim upon me, and the sums I give away among them are unknown.”

“ *That* I believe,” said Crab, with an air of very significant assent.

“ In fact, I am obliged to do a great deal in my own neighbourhood, for——”

“ Charity covereth a multitude of sins,” interposed Crab ; “ though, in the Proverbs of Solomon, I believe the word is love, and not charity,—but I suppose they are synonymous.”

“ However, I don’t complain, for we have good authority for saying that what we thus bestow will be returned to us seven-fold, even in this world.”

“ Ay, ay, Captain ! *Solas quas dederis semper habebis opes*—the only riches you always retain are those you have given away. No charitable man therefore can ever plead poverty.”

“ Faith, then ! I’m not the man to do

that, and no need ; better luck for me ! But one can't be lavishing in all directions. My expenses in that way at Clognakilty House are monstrous ; quite incredible !"

"Perfectly !" ejaculated Crab.

"However, I am not the man, I say, to boast of my benevolence. What I give away among my own people in Ireland, in addition to my English claims, is neither here nor there." Crab nodded with judicial gravity, as much as to say, "The court is with you."

"I repeat that I don't want to make a brag of these things, nor do they concern others, for I am quite aware that my private charities are nothing to anybody."

"There I agree with you *verbatim et literatim*," cried Crab. "Oh ! how pleasant is it when neighbours agree together—in charity !"

"What's all this sparring and fencing about ?" demanded Brown. "If any of you imagine that I shall suffer you to bear one farthing of the expense to which I may be put by this poor lunatic, you'll find yourselves deucedly mistaken. Not such a

shabby fellow. What! think you've got to deal with a pauper? Flatter myself I have more than seven and ninepence in my pocket at *present*;—rather think I'm in pretty good credit;—have a strong suspicion that the Manor-House estate belongs to me; that my account at the banker's is not overdrawn; and that my name is in the books of the Bank of England. Ha! ha!" His cane was rapped affirmatively upon the ground as he cast a challenging look at his auditors, which seemed to inquire whether any of them would dare to gainsay his assertions.

"Mrs. Glossop," said the merchant to his housekeeper, two or three days after the colloquy, "poor Susan chambermaid looks very pale, and I'm afraid she'll be knocked up presently if she's to be always dancing attendance upon our patient. Besides, we can't spare her, and I've been thinking we ought to engage somebody on purpose to wait upon the invalid, and toddle about the house and grounds with her, and watch her, for she may, perhaps, try

to escape again, or get into some fresh mischief."

"I'm sure, Sir, I'm glad to hear you say so, for we can't never go in this dreadfully *à la bonne heure* way. It's quite one person's work to attend to her, but I s'pose it won't last long, and that you'll soon send her away *shay voo*."

"No such luck! no such luck! for aught I know to the contrary, she may live and die here."

"*Mon doo*, Sir! you don't mean to say so. What, keep her here as long as she's a *bon vivant*? And such a nice, pretty, genteel young woman too. La, sir! what will the people say? What a scandal it will make! How all the gossips and neighbours will lift up their hands and eyes!"

"Mrs. Glossop! I think I told you some time ago that all the gossips and neighbours might go to the devil, and that you had my permission to follow them. That liberal offer I beg leave to repeat."

"La, Sir! how can you talk so? Whatever you wish must, of course, be done

and I'm sure I've taken my share in attending to her."

"Now, I was thinking," pursued Brown, "of engaging Fanny Chubbs to come and stay with us as the poor lady's servant and companion. She's a nice girl, is Fanny, and I dare say she would like the change; and it might do her good, for she would live better here than she can at the farm, and she looks very peaky and delicate. Keep her supplied with the posset I ordered?"

"Yes, Sir; she has it once a-week, and sometimes twice; but still, as I told her mother, in my flagitious way, and though Fanny does her best to conceal it, it's evident to me that she's in a very bad way, in fact, quite a *malade imaginaire*."

"Well, then, I'll walk over to Four-oak Farm myself, and speak to Mrs. Chubbs on the subject. Nothing like time present, and what a fellow does himself is generally well done."

Most inauspicious and inopportune for the inmates of the farm was the moment selected for his visit, John Chubbs having just then

been led home in a glorious state of intoxication, after celebrating, in company with Jem Belcher and two or three others, the anniversary of one of the battles in which he had been engaged. Being just in that happy medium between singing, hiccoughing, and approaching drowsiness, when the drunkard, imagining himself to be still sober, mistakes a blind doggedness for a proof of rationality and free will, he had seated himself upon a large linen-chest that stood near the fire, still holding in his mouth the pipe which had stimulated his deep potations, and obstinately resisting all his wife's entreaties that he would suffer himself to be helped up-stairs and put to bed. Throwing frequent and anxious glances at the window while she was thus occupied,—for she dreaded the approach of any visitant who might detect him in this disreputable state,—the good woman suddenly uttered a suppressed cry, followed by the terrified exclamation of, “O goodness gracious me! what *will* become of us all? Sure as ever I be a living woman, here's the Squire a coming, and if John is cotched

in this here state we shall all be ruined for good and all ! Here, Fanny dear, bear a hand—quick—quick—let's see if we can't get him up-stairs." Weakened by her previous illness and present agitation, Fanny could render but little assistance. Chubbs, resisting their purpose, would not allow himself to be supported farther than to the next chair, into which he heavily sank, vainly trying to hiccough the burthen of a barrack song, and half unconsciously, but very firmly, clinging to the seat when they essayed to move him farther.

"Mother ! mother !" cried Fanny, glancing at the window, "the Squire has got to the garden-gate. What *shall* we do ? We can never move him ; but can't we hide him in the chest ? he'll fall asleep in a minute."

"So he will, so he will," replied the mother, at the same time pushing the chair to the side of the chest, and throwing open the lid. By their joint exertions the drunken man was rolled into the receptacle, falling upon the linen at the bottom without offering any further resistance, under the mis-

taken notion that his own bed and bedroom had been brought down-stairs, and placed near the fire, which he seemed to think a very great improvement upon the ordinary arrangement and construction of the house. The lid was closed; Fanny, not knowing in her confusion how to employ herself, flew to an empty churn, which she plied with as much energy as if she were working for her life; while the mother, still red and out of breath from her exertions, hurried to the door, and received her dreaded visitant with as many low curtsies as if she did not heartily wish him at York or Jericho.

Brown entered the room in a bad humour. He hated all people who ran in debt, more especially where the money was owing to himself, and a single survey with his keen suspicious eye presently assured him that his chance of payment had been diminished, rather than increased, since his last visit. On all sides he beheld evidence of an arduous and painful struggle between the cleanly industry of the wife and daughters, and the poverty forced upon the family by

the intemperate habits of the master. The hams and farm produce which he had seen hanging from the beam on his previous visit had disappeared, as well as a portion of the furniture and the shining garniture of the huge mantel-shelf; several broken panes of glass were cleverly repaired with paper; and the dress of both mother and daughter, though still clean and neat, was patched and threadbare. Stern and inflexible as is the morality that is based upon principle, it is less inexorable than that which springs from interest; no wonder, therefore, that Brown's virtuous indignation against Chubbs's bibulous sins flared up the more strongly as he noticed these diminished probabilities of ever obtaining the overdue rent. Just as he was about to launch into an angry invective against sots, his eye fell upon Fanny, and, as the current of his thoughts changed, his mood softened into gentleness and ruth. "Fanny, dear," he exclaimed in an affectionate tone, "you still look very, very poorly. Does Mrs. Glossop send you the posset regularly?"

“Yes, Sir,—yes, thankye, Sir,” was the curtsying and blushing reply; “and I am sure I don’t know how I shall ever be grateful enough for all your kindness.”

“Nor I either,” echoed the mother.

“Well, then, I’ll tell you what you shall do, so as to render a service both to yourself and me, to say nothing of the poor lady up at the Manor-House.”—He then detailed his plan, and stated the wages he proposed to pay her; but as his financial faculty was always quickened, and his moral sense a little blunted, whenever he drove a bargain of any sort, he could not help adding that he should deduct the amount of her wages from the debt due by the father.

“O, Sir! I shall be so happy to accept your offer!” cried Fanny, clasping her hands together in the delighted anticipation of quitting a home which her father’s increasing sottishness rendered every day more disagreeable.

“Well, then, that affair’s all settled. Come to us to-morrow or next day—’twill save the trouble of sending down the posset, you

know ; and as you may want a trifle, perhaps, to furbish up your wardrobe, here it is—and that binds the bargain : so, there—you are regularly enlisted in my service.” With these words he placed a five-pound note in her hand, and then, seating himself upon the chest, with the altered air of a man whose gracious mood was at an end, and who meant thenceforth to be rigorous and stern in his purpose, he continued—“And now tell me where *is* this precious father of yours ? I must see him immediately.” Overwhelmed with confusion, poor Fanny stooped down twice to pick up nothing, looked anxiously around as if in search of some missing article, felt in both her pockets, and then, resuming her seat, began to ply the empty churn with prodigious rapidity.

“You took a mug of warm milk, Squire, last time you was here,” cried the mother, anxious to turn his attention and to extricate her daughter, whom she thought likely to boggle at a direct falsehood : “would you like to have another now, Sir ? Here, Sally, Sally ! fetch the Squire a mug of warm

milk directly." Sally hastened to obey this order, in spite of Brown's surlily exclaiming—

"I don't want milk, and I do want an answer to my question. Where's your husband, Madam?"

"What, John?—what, Chubbs?—do you mean John Chubbs, Sir?" faltered the wife.

"Of course I do;—got no other husbands, have you?"

"Dear heart, Squire! the Lord forbid! Only I was just going to remark——"

"Hallo!" interposed Brown, "who is it I hear sneezing? It sounded from the chest."

"So it did, I do declare! Why, you see, Sir, our cat have kittened, and so we allow her to lie in the old chest, and she have picked up a cold somehow."

"And I should like to pick up an answer to my question—where is your husband?"

"Very true, very true: I recollect now you was a talking of my John. Why, you see, he thought Wellington were a little bit

tender in the forefoot yesterday, and so he have taken him down to the farrier's, and he be always a long time a dawdling when once he do get there." The lock of the linen-chest having been wrenched off by the younger children and never replaced, there was an aperture in front, through which, at this moment, Chubbs unconsciously thrust the heated bowl of his pipe in such a way that it encountered the calf of Brown's leg.

"Zounds and the devil!" shouted the sufferer, jumping down and rubbing the part aggrieved; "does your cat bite in that way? Drown her, drown her with all her litter. I hate cats. Harkee, Madam! tell your sot of a husband that, if I am not paid my rent at the end of this quarter, I shall put an execution in the house and distrain. More than a dozen times has he promised to call upon me, and never come. The fact is, he is afraid to look me in the face, and, though he's an old soldier and a Waterlooman, I'm sorry to say he's neither more nor less than a coward."

"That's a lie!" shouted Chubbs, throwing open the lid of the chest so suddenly that it dashed the mug out of Sally's hand as she was passing, and scattered the new milk all over Brown. "Come on, ye ly—ly—lying rascal," hiccoughed the drunken farmer, raising himself on his knees, and throwing his hands, one of which still held the pipe, into an abortive attempt at a pugilistic attitude. "I'll fi—fi—fight ye for gallon in skit—skittle-ground, Green Man."

"John, my dear John!" cried the terrified wife, putting her hand over his mouth, "for Heaven's sake hold your tongue—it's the Squire!"

"Damn the Squire!" sputtered the pot-valiant farmer through the finger-bars, at the same time throwing the pipe at his astonished landlord with a most defying air.

"O dear! O dear!" sobbed little Sally, "what will become of us all? Father has broke the mug, spilt the milk, and said a naughty word to the Squire!"

"O Sir! pray, pray forgive him," cried the wife with an appealing look: "you see,

poor John don't know what he be about nor what he be a saying, no more nor a babby."

"Fanny," said Brown, nodding to the daughter, who stood weeping on the other side of her father, "don't be afraid—don't cry—I shall hold to my bargain with you: come up to the Manor-House to-morrow or next day. Mrs. Chubbs, I am sorry for you—you seem to deserve a better husband. As for you, John Chubbs, I shall let you know my mind pretty freely some other time. At present you are not yourself—you are not in your proper character—you are only a *locum tenens*, as it were."

"You're another," shouted the farmer indignantly; "and if you co—come to calling names, I'll give you as good as you bring any day in the year. Stand aside, dame, and see how I'll kno—kno—knock the fellow down." So saying, he raised his hand, and, in the effort of throwing it out, fell helplessly back in the chest, of which his wife again closed the lid, to prevent further mischief, and was about to renew

her intercessions in his favour, when Brown waved his hand pettishly to silence her, and, striking his cane angrily upon the floor, hurried out of the room.

CHAPTER IX.

HAVE we not mentioned a lane, slightly diverging from the green of Woodcote, and offering a nearer conveyance to the Manor-House? In winter-time its deep ruts rendered it hardly passable except for carts and waggons, while its pools and quagmires unfitted it for the passage of gentle feet; but in spring and summer the Shaw Lane—for thus was it called, from the little thickets that skirted it at intervals—offered a pleasant and shady walk to those who wished to avoid the dust of the high road. Partly sunk between high tufted banks pierced with occasional openings to the fields on either side, partly overshadowed by copses that completely shut out the view, it presented sufficient variety of scenery to interest the

pedestrian, though its features were not more attractive than such as are commonly encountered in our rural districts.

But what is there that is not beautiful in the season of early spring? Even in the shadiest parts of the lane the tufts of May waving backwards and forwards in the wind made a light and a perfume of their own, as if they had been so many vases of incense wafted by invisible hands;—the banks and ditches were tessellated with cowslips, violets, wild hyacinths, blue germanders, foxgloves, lilies of the valley, and marsh marigolds, sometimes flaring in the ray with all the gorgeous brightness of a painted abbey-window, and in other places imparting a rich hue to the dim sunless nooks out of which they peered like so many varicoloured and rooted eyes:—butterflies spread their painted sails in the air-ocean;—the wild flowers shook on their stalks, as the bee, ceasing his murmured grace, settled upon them and commenced his honey-banquet;—the hedge-birds twittered and quivered lovingly together, or chased one another with a

trembling eagerness, while the soaring lark poured down a gush of ecstasy from on high; the cattle were lowing with tranquil enjoyment amid the buttercupped and daisied herbage; the trees pushed forth their fingered leaves, and unfolded their buds, as if eager to feel and to kiss the balmy vernal air; all nature, both animate and inanimate, seemed to be thrilling with enjoyment of the season.

Men there are—we speak not of clowns and clodhoppers, but of educated and intelligent beings—who could plod upon their way along the Shaw Lane in the spring season, with little more consciousness of its beauties, because they were of an ordinary character, than the cattle which were driven along it to the farm homestead. But to him who possessed the additional and happy sense of a quick eye and apprehensive sense for the observance of natural beauties, however commonplace, the scattered copses that overhung and skirted the Shaw Lane converted it into a gallery of pictures, all executed by the same master-hand, yet ever

varying in beauty and character, according to the change of position, or the play of light and shade.

Nature is an artist in whose works we can rarely detect a want of harmony, either in colour, tone, or form. Intermingled together in wild yet accordant confusion, the copses presented every variety of tint from the wan gray of the willow, the silver whiteness of the ash, and the bright green of the sycamore, to the graver hues of the beech, the elm, and the oak ; while the forms varied from the spreading to the compact, from the round to the aspiring, the clumps being occasionally surmounted by a poplar, waving gracefully to and fro, like a tall feather in the leafy head-dress of nature. Nor was the symphony of sound less marked and pleasing than the concord of forms and colours—the lowing of the cows, the bleating of the sheep, and the song of the birds, blending into one choral anthem with the rustling wind ; while ever and anon there broke from some mysterious distance the two fluty notes of the cuckoo, whose magic

voice is always heard with a new delight, since it seldom fails to conjure up before us the pleasant recollection of our childhood.

“I have always maintained,” said Walter Latimer, as he accompanied Ellen Molloy along the Shaw Lane on their way to the Manor-House, “that the spring exercises the same delightful and vivifying influence upon *us* as upon the products of the earth, making the blood in our veins dance and effervesce in merry sympathy with the sap in the trees. At all events, I can answer for my own fellow-feeling with nature, for methinks I am never so happy as in the exhilarating month of May. Not only do my intellects seem brighter, but my affections appear warmer, and those whom I always love I love still more fondly and dearly at this delicious season.” As he spoke thus he gently pressed the arm of his companion, gazing upon her at the same time with all a lover’s tenderness. Ellen only replied by a sigh, and her eyes, instead of reciprocating his fond regards, were bent pensively upon the ground.

"How is this?" pursued Walter; "you used, dear Ellen, to feel the cheering influence of a beautiful spring not less sensibly than myself, but for these few days past I have noticed a dejection in your manner that seems to defy all the gladdening powers of May and sunshine."

"I was in hopes you would not have observed it, dear Walter, as I have striven hard to conceal it from you, above all others; but I must confess that I have latterly been exposed to an annoyance which has distressed me more than, perhaps, it ought to have done, and which I only refrained from mentioning to you because I was in daily hopes that——"

"Nay, dear Ellen, this was hardly kind: surely the great charm of our betrothal is the perfect confidence and intercommunion of soul that it sanctions, thus enabling us to halve our sorrows and double our pleasures by sharing them with each other? And now you would withhold a vexation which I have a right to divide with you. Come, come, dearest! you must not have any reserves from me."

“Perhaps I was wrong, but, as I told you, or rather as I was about to tell you, I lived in daily hope that there would be no longer any cause for my low spirits. The fact is, dear Walter, that I have latterly been pestered with the offensive attentions and fulsome compliments of that odious Mr. Cavendish.”

“What ! has the insolent coxcomb again presumed to ogle you in the vulgar manner you once described, and of which, had I been with you at the time, I should certainly have expressed my opinion to him in no very measured terms ?”

“Sorry am I to say that he has changed his mode of annoyance into a still more distressing one. After having so long kept aloof from my father, he has now sought his acquaintance, currying favour by sending him presents of game, or occasionally lending him a horse, and frequently calling at our cottage, when he singles me out, in a very marked manner, for his hated courtesies and unwelcome adulation.”

“The saucy jackanapes ! But, surely, surely, Ellen, you may put a quick end to

this ; you may repel and frown down his rude advances."

"Easily enough, if they were rude ; but they have now become so obsequious and deferential that it is difficult to quarrel with him, which is the very reason why I think his fawning much more hateful than his free-and-easy mood. That he is utterly odious to me I take no trouble to conceal ; but how can you repel a man who is studiously polite, and who will not suffer himself to be repulsed, even when you let him plainly see that his person and his pretensions, whatever they may be, are equally revolting to you ?"

"Why don't you complain to your father, and request his interference ?"

"Ah, dear Walter !" exclaimed Ellen, and her voice became tremulous with emotion ; "would to Heaven I could do so with any prospect of success, but it is from that quarter alone that I have any misgivings, any apprehensions. Mr. Cavendish I could shake off as easily as any other noxious and crawling reptile, but my father, I grieve to

say it, encourages his attentions, and positively—nay, angrily and menacingly—prohibits me from giving him his dismissal.”

“Good Heavens! Ellen, you alarm me. What can the Captain mean, knowing, as he does, our solemn engagement? He would not, surely, withdraw the conditional sanction that he gave to it?”

“Alas! he now sees in it nothing but insurmountable difficulties and interminable delays. Mr. Brown, he contends, is a moody, capricious, splenetic old man, who, being unable to make up his mind as to the choice of an heir, may, probably, when he dies, leave all his money to an hospital. At all events, he feels confident that he loves his money too well to part with any of it in his lifetime; whereas Algernon Cavendish, he urges——”

“What, then! does he consider that empty-headed fop a declared suitor for your hand?”

“Not a declared but an expected one—a man who must be courted to continue his pointed attentions, until, to use

my father's own words (you know his rattling way of talking), he has gone too far to recede, and must be driven, if he won't be led, into the matrimonial noose. In vain do I declare, as I have done over and over, that I loathe and despise Mr. Cavendish,—that I have bestowed my affections upon another,—that I consider you as my affianced husband. 'Tush, Nell!' he exclaims; 'Jove laughs, you know, at lovers' vows: a mere verbal engagement of this nature only stands good until a better one offers;—men jilt women, and women jilt men, every day in the year; and as to your not liking young Cavendish, what girl cares a button about the man when she can secure a brilliant settlement?' ”

“ I will candidly confess, dear Ellen, that I am less surprised at his thus counselling you to break your faith than at his betraying such an utter indifference to your happiness.”

“ But in his estimation riches and splendour *are* happiness. ‘By the powers! Nell,’ has he repeatedly exclaimed to me, ‘you forget what an immense catch this young

fellow will prove, heir as he is to the title and large fortune of Sir Gregory, to the mansion and estate in the country, and to one of the best houses in London.' Matilda, whose lively imagination already revels in all the gaieties of the metropolis, is for ever harping upon the same discordant string ; so that you cannot wonder, although I turn a deaf ear, as well as I can, to all their solicitations and worryings, that I have been unable to prevent their depressing my spirits. But why do you sigh, dear Walter, and preserve such a pensive silence ? Methinks I might retort your charge of dejection, and accuse you of harbouring some bosom grief which you ought to have communicated to me."

"To the feeling, dearest, I will plead guilty, but not to the wish of concealing it. I was thinking—and I confess the thought was a painful one—how very little I have to offer you—I, a humble villager, and comparatively a pauper—to counterbalance the brilliant prospects which you are thus surrendering for my sake."

"Nay, dear Walter, who is unkind now ?

This remark was not like yourself, and it sounds, therefore, ungraciously in my ears. How very little you have to offer me! Do you not tender to me that which I prize above all earthly blessings—your own good, and gentle, and affectionate heart? And what have I—so far as worldly gifts are concerned—what have I to tender to your acceptance but——”

“The best, most charming, and most fascinating girl in the whole wide world,” interposed Walter, tenderly embracing his companion.

“Well, then, if I am all-sufficient to you, do me the justice to believe that I view you in the same light, and never again venture to insinuate that, when I refuse the addresses of a rich man whom I despise, and hold fast in my affiance with a poor one whom I love, I can either feel myself, or wish to be considered by others, as making a sacrifice.”

“Never again, my ever kind-hearted and generous-minded Ellen, will I revert to this subject, since it gives you pain. But still, if

your constancy and truth have banished apprehension on my own account, it is most distressing to think that you should be subject to this persecution."

"That I cannot deny, for it is painful to maintain an every-day struggle with one's own family, especially when they reproach you, not only with an indifference to your own interest, but to theirs."

"Will you then, my beloved Ellen, will you promise me, if this contest becomes more urgent and annoying,—if it interferes in any way with your peace of mind and the comfort of your home,—to put an end to it at once, by consenting to our immediate marriage?"

"We shall not, I trust, be driven to any such alternative, for I hear that the Cavendish family will be shortly returning to London, and it is probable that the young coxcomb may have been only bestowing his tediousness upon me for want of a better occupation; but should any attempts be made to force him upon my acceptance, I have no hesitation in answer-

ing that I would at once accede to your proposition."

"And this you promise me—faithfully, solemnly?"

"Faithfully, solemnly, dear Walter; and there is my hand to bind the bargain."

"Ten thousand thousand thanks!" ejaculated the lover, covering her hand with kisses. "You have rolled away a stone from my heart, dearest Ellen, and have made me love you still more tenderly than before, which only half an hour ago I should have held to be impossible. As it is, I may leave Mr. Cavendish to pursue his unwelcome visits, until fashion calls him away to resume his dissipated career in the metropolis. It is no scandal, I believe, to say that he is a profligate as well as a puppy. My dear mother, ever preferring her children to herself, suggests that by laying down our little carriage I should be the better enabled to support a wife; but I would never consent, nor would you, as I well know, to deprive her of a comfort so essential to a cripple."

"Certainly not, and so I told her most explicitly when she made a similar proposition to myself."

"As to my prospects in other respects, they are not unlike the view now before us in the Shaw Lane, which is intersected here and there by bright openings, succeeded by obscurity and gloom. Do you observe that at the present moment the upper portion of our bodies catches the sloping ray of the sun, while our feet are in deep shade? Even so my head and heart have been sometimes bright with hope, as I pursued some new scheme, while the event has proved my footsteps to have been hurrying forward in the dark."

"This shows that you must not allow your hopes to travel too fast. It will be time enough to discuss our further plan of proceeding when you have obtained the situation for which you have applied."

"But, in the mean while, you will not forget your pledge as to the Cavendish persecution."

"Surely you do not doubt me already.

I have given you my promise once, and I repeat it."

"But you gave me your hand before, to bind the bargain."

"Foolish Walter! there it is again, since you require an additional security, though I am half angry with you for your implied mistrust."

Ellen's beaming and affectionate looks did not support the averment, even of her half anger: Walter again covered the pledged hand with kisses, and thus the lovers pursued their way in the calm but deep felicity of mutual confidence and attachment, until they emerged from the Shaw Lane and reached the Manor-House.

Letter from Mrs. Glossop to Mrs. Jellicoe.

"*Ma share* Mrs. Jellicoe,

"Never was there a more complete case of *trompay voo* than when I imagined the country to be all a sort of *laissez moi tranquereel* kind of existence, where all the *paysongs* had that simplicity of character which the French so strangely term *knaveyay*. *Toot o con-*

traire ! I can assure you that a *fate sham-paytre* is full of the most unscrewtable *denou-mongs*, and I can safely assert that the village of Woodcote, since my last letter, is more like a *coo de theatre*, than a quiet village in the *a la campagne*. First and foremost, young Allan Latimer, who was always running in master's head, so much so that it was said he had made him his hair, and who was always preambing the grounds with him, and playing at billiards, till he was quite *au naturel* in the house—well, this Mr. Allan, after making *bose yew*, and sending *billy doos*, and having a regular *affair de coor* with Miss Molloy of this place, until she was dying of *amour propre* for him, ran away from Woodcote, leaving the poor girl *au comble despoir* ! Was there ever such a case of cruel and deliberate *bonhommie* ? If ever master did make him his hair, I'm sure he has cut him off now, for he won't hear his name mentioned. For my part, I always thought he was an impeccable *volauvong* of a fellow, and this shows that I was right. Poor Miss Molloy must cure

the wound in her heart as well as she can, but I dare say it will be an eyesore as long as she lives.

“The affair of the Monk who jumped into Chubbs’s cart continues in the same state of *je ne say quoi*: and *Oh ma share!* we have had another *espieglerie* still more obviously mysterious. On his return at night from a distant visit, what should master meet with in an old unfurnished house but a poor crazy mad woman, whom he brought home in the carriage, and here she has remained ever since, just as if she were *shay voo!* When we took her out all covered with blood,—for she had thrust her arms through the pains of the window,—I was in a complete state of *epouvantable*, with a *batmong de coor* in every one of my limbs; but we got her to bed, and as she was in a high fever we applied a catechism to her chest, and gave her a soaperivorous draft; and although she had already lost a good deal of blood, Dr. Dawson had recourse to further insurrection, and applied the lancet. —She passed a very restless night, which

the Doctor attributed to the fleabottomy, upon which I flared up, and told him face to face,—*dos a do* as the French say,—that we had nothing of the sort in the house, and never had. The Cheltenham Doctor says it is only an extempore arrangement of her faculties, and not a case of confirmed inanity ; but in the mean time her wits are quite *hore de combat*, so that it's all one and the same thing, or *two le maim* as the French say.

“ Who and what she is, nobody has yet found out—*tong pea* ! No doubt she has escaped from some lunar Elysium, but we can't discover it, although master has inserted advertisements every day of the week in the Gloucester ‘Weekly Dispatch.’ In her first dreadful state of *nonchalance* I was almost afraid to go near her, but, by struggling to become spontaneous, I have at last succeeded. People say strange things about her (*au naturel* of course), insinuating that she must have committed a *pas seul* with some one ; but I do hope she is neither an *equivoke*, nor a *mauvaise honte*, nor anything

of the sort, but a proper *come il fo*, for she has all the appearance of a lady. She wears a wedding-ring, which looks well; but that may be only a *double entendre* after all. She is quite a *jolly garson*,—small,—in fact, almost a *petty maitre*; but as we can't get her to *parlay voo*, we have been unable to learn anything as to her family. An audible curiosity led me to examine her clothes for marks, or the officials of her name, but I could not find anything of the sort. If we learn anything more implicit I will write to you again. In the mean time, pray don't form any injurious conclusions about the poor lady, as if she were not a *dame donneur*. *Honey swore key Molly paunch* is my motto, as I tell everybody that insinuates a doubt upon the subject; and I'm quite sure that you have the same *tout ensemble* as myself.

“A curious *come say drole* occurred here last week. In clearing away the ground at the foot of the old pigeon-house the workmen discovered a large stone, sculptured with figures in the very best *mauvay goo*. A woman with a sword, and a youth with

either a torch or a *two le maim* in his hand, are seen kneeling at the feet of an old man with a rosier on his head, holding a mitre. Some say the figures are paregorical, but it is evident, *a moi*, that they have no *savoir vivre* of the subject. To be sure I am very apt to jumble historical names and make a complete *chevoo de freeze* of my chrownology; but I do know, of course, that Joan of Arc and Guy Fawkes were the children of Cardinal Wolsey, by Mary Queen of Scots, and, *selon moi*, they are here represented kneeling at his *coo de piay* for his blessing, the sword showing Joan of Arc, and the torch Guy. It must be Cardinal Wolsey at all events, for during our *sejour à Paris* we lived next door to a cemetery where they educated boys for the priesthood, so that I know the dress of the Catholic parsons and young clerks, for I used to see hundreds of them every day. *Vous savez, ma share*, that they are all doomed to sellybasy; and I'm sure it quite gave me a *mal au coor* to see so many poor little fellows, knowing that none of them could ever be

enrolled in the ranks of Highmen. If I was king of France, I would immediately abolish all the conventional and bombastic houses with one *coup deuil*.

“ Adoo, *mon share enfant gatay!* I hope you are quite *portay vous bien*, as I am at this present writing.

“ *Toojoor a voo,*

“ MARY GLOSSOP.”

CHAPTER X.

So deep had been the disappointment of Allan Latimer when witnessing the morning rehearsal of 'Norma,' so keen his apprehensions that Isola would fail in her first assumption of the character, that he not only adhered to his resolution of absenting himself during all the subsequent rehearsals, but felt an increasing nervousness as the important night approached which was to put to so severe a test the operatic powers of his fair friend. A general and intense interest had been excited by the announcement of her first appearance in this character, many good musical judges having expressed their opinion that, with all her talents and vocal capabilities, she could hardly expect to rival, much less to eclipse,

the great and gifted predecessor who had obtained such high distinction and won such universal favour by her performance of the part. Sinister whispers were afloat of her having completely broken down during the rehearsals; many, recurring to the invariable argument of the English, made bets that the manager would not renew his engagement with her after the expiration of the first limited term; jealous competitors, aggravating and repeating these rumours until they believed them, revelled in the anticipation of witnessing her downfall; and if Allan, whose admiration of Isola increased with every fresh interview, became daily more alarmed and distressed by these ominous forebodings, her own conduct was little calculated to reassure him. Although she fully admitted the great importance of the crisis, since it must accelerate or retard her return to Italy, the paramount object of all her efforts and all her wishes, her language and demeanour did not evince any correspondent anxiety to ensure success. With a *nonchalance* which, under such circum-

stances, might almost be termed a reckless levity, she only smiled and shrugged her shoulders when these evil auguries reached her ear, playfully expressing a hope that she might still be engaged as a chorus-singer, even should she be rejected as a *prima donna*; and anticipating with a mock solemnity the rapid falling away of her admirers and followers when she herself, no longer a fashionable operatic leader, should be lost in the subordinate train of some more successful Norma. From one circumstance alone did Allan gather any confidence. In the midst of all this seeming indifference and sportive bantering, he observed that for several hours of every morning she rigorously shut herself up, excluding all visitants, during which time, as he gathered from old Antonio, she was occupied in the incessant practice and study of her part.

Being obliged, on the anxious night of the performance, to cross the stage on his way to the box in which she had offered him a seat, Allan could not avoid noticing the altered appearance presented by every-

thing around him. Seeing nothing of the house, for the drop-scene was down, light, order, and arrangement were everywhere substituted for the gloom and confusion he had remarked on his previous visit. On the stage he beheld the sacred forest of the Druids, with its consecrated oak in the centre, and wooded hills in the distance; while here and there emerged priests in their solemn robes, or soldiers of the Gallic army arrayed in all the pride of their barbaric panoply. But if his vision was agreeably surprised in one direction, it was painfully revolted in an opposite quarter of the stage, where was collected a little knot of dancers,—the effeminate men, rouged and whitewashed, wearing tuckered vests, and a species of short petticoat; while the females, in their nondescript costume, seemed to have consulted anything rather than the decencies of the sex.

But if he *were* shocked by their appearance alone, he was both startled and disgusted when they began to attitudenise, to spin round, to throw out and distort their

limbs in the most violent postures, for no other purpose, as it appeared, than to amuse a little circle of opera frequenters, both old and young, who stood leering and smirking around them. Quitting this knot of indelicate tumblers,—for such they seemed to his unpractised eyes,—he made his way to Isola's box, which was immediately above the stage, although at some little elevation.

Amazed as he had been at the metamorphosis behind the drop-scene, the revolution in front of the house struck him with tenfold wonder. The huge dim vault, with the mysterious echoes from its undiscernible boundaries, was now transformed into a radiant and a crowded theatre, sparkling with innumerable lustres, and gay dresses, and bright-eyed beauties, while its painted dome echoed back the hum of eager voices and the preludings of the full orchestra. Even at this early hour, so great and general had been the excitement that the boxes were mostly occupied, while the pit and gallery had for some time been crowded, the prevalent subject of conversation being the chances

of Isola's failure or success, which were canvassed with equal confidence by the partisans of both sides.

At length the leader of the band gave the admonitory tap with his bow, and the overture commenced, exciting perhaps less attention and admiration than on any previous night, on account of the impatience of the audience for the commencement of the opera, and the appearance of the great attraction of the night. The drop-scene rose—the Gaulish army marched upon the stage to the solemn sound of religious music, followed by a procession of Druids and priests—and Allan, hardly able to credit the evidence of his senses, so perfect and absolute was the illusion of the spectacle, felt, from the thrill of admiring wonderment that crept through his whole frame, an instant conviction that, in the mingled and exquisite delight which it pours so lavishly upon the eye and ear, no fascination can be so absorbing, so irresistible, as that of the Opera. In his instance the impression combined everything that could add to its intensity,

for he was a passionate admirer of music, and this was the first time that he had ever entered a metropolitan theatre.

Shakspeare has remarked the indifference and languor that pervade an audience "after some well-graced actor leaves the stage,"—an observation equally applicable to the interval that precedes the first appearance of any celebrated performer. So it proved, at least, on the present occasion, for, though the early scenes of *Norma* are by no means deficient in interest, while the parts of Oroveso, Pollio, and Flavio were sustained by performers of no mean celebrity, the audience, or rather the spectators, paying but little attention to the business of the stage, were whispering to one another on the subject of *Isola Guardia*, or turning impatiently to the libretto, to ascertain the precise moment of her appearance. It arrived at length ; and, after the first eager twittering that announced the fact, every voice was hushed,—not a fan moved,—an almost breathless silence pervaded the whole house,—and every eye of that multitudinous

assemblage was gathered into one single focus.

Allan, whose anxious solicitude had been momentarily increasing, now felt his heart beat with a throbbing almost insupportably vehement as he riveted his gaze upon the stage. Druids, priestesses, warriors, bards, and sacrificing priests, entered in procession, and arranged themselves around the altar—there was a short pause—expectation was concentrated into intensity—a scarcely audible but thrilling hush breathed round the house; and Norma,—her exuberant dark hair hanging loose, a wreath of vervain around her brow, a golden sickle in her hand,—walked majestically forwards, seated herself on the Druidical stone, and cast a proud upbraiding look upon her silent, awe-stricken followers. From Allan's mind did that single look dispel all doubt, all fear, all misgiving, as to her conception of the character, even should her vocal powers prove inadequate to support her own lofty imaginings. Like lightning did the conviction flash upon his mind that, in the inspiration of true genius, she had

undergone a temporary metempsychosis, and had infused her whole soul into the character she had assumed,—a transmigration which, by completely shutting out the audience from her thoughts and apprehensions, left her in full possession of herself and all her vocal powers.

Full, firm, sonorous, the very first sounds she uttered confirmed this impression, and it soon became a doubt which was most to be admired—the rapt, graceful, and impassioned dignity of her acting, or the exquisite and appropriate modulation of her voice. Still, however, there were many who questioned her ultimate triumph when her powers, great as they appeared in this incipient stage of the opera, should be subjected to the more trying ordeal of its later scenes: but when, as the attendant assemblage fell prostrate around her, she slowly uplifted her arms towards the full moon, and poured forth, with all the devout ardour of an inspired prophetess, the *Pregiera* of “*Casta Diva, che inargenti,*” the enthusiasm of the whole audience vented itself in a burst of irrepress-

ible delight, and all doubt of her eventual success was banished from the minds even of the most envious and sceptical.

As the first act proceeded, every fresh display of her powers was hailed with increasing fervour, especially when the devotional elevation and proud bearing which she had previously sustained were succeeded by the most feminine, the most melting, the most pathetic tenderness of look and tone, as she embraced her children, and desired her attendant to conceal them. "What an affectionate, what a doting mother would that woman make!" murmured Allan, as his thoughts almost unconsciously sounded the depths of futurity, and conjured up a vague image of a happy home, with Isola seated on one side, himself on the other, and two sweet children playing on the carpet between them. "What a marvellous power of adaptation, both in voice and feature!" he continued; "what a miraculous versatility! Who would have thought that so much feminine softness could be combined with the majestic dignity of the Druidess?"

A still more startling, but much less pleasing, change awaited him. When Norma discovers that the father of her offspring has proved false—when she seizes the arm of his guilty mistress, and in an agony of jealous rage upbraids her with her crime,—Allan found it difficult to believe that he was gazing upon the features, and listening to the tones, of the same being who had lately hung with such beaming gentleness, and poured forth such tender regrets, over her children. Changed, utterly changed, was her whole aspect. Every vein started into prominence as the blood rushed into her face and throat, her eyes flashed fire, each feature was distorted, her lips were drawn back from the teeth, like those of a wild animal about to spring upon its prey; and when, in the same scene, worked up to a paroxysm of rage, she dismisses her faithless lover with the indignant “*Vanne, si; mi lascia, indegno!*” her maledictions were vented with a terrible energy that it became perfectly appalling to witness and to hear.

“Is this the kind, the gentle, the dulcet

Isola?" whispered Allan, as the blood ran cold in his veins, and he strove in vain to withdraw his eyes from the contemplation of a scene that fascinated still more than it surprised him.—"Crevetti, I remember, told me that she was the daughter of a captain of banditti;—yes—yes—nothing but the fiery passions which she has inherited from a freebooter of the Abruzzi mountains could thus enable her to transform herself into a sort of Fury; but, Oh Heavens!—how beautiful is her rage! how thrilling, how sublime are the tones of this fierce anathema!"

Again, in the second act, as she raised the dagger to sacrifice her sleeping children, woke them with her shriek of horror, and then embraced them in a passion of relenting tears and tenderness, Allan's sympathising bosom was torn and convulsed by the contending emotions of terror, compassion, and deep admiration of the almost miraculous powers of the performer, who could thus adapt herself to every change with an equal intensity of feeling, and thrilling truth of representation. These emotions suffered no

diminution during the remainder of the performance, which was sustained throughout with an unfailing pre-eminence of genius, and concluded amid a general and enthusiastic burst of "*Viva! Brava!*" mingled with incessant cries of "*Guardia! Guardia!*" as if the appellants supplicated her to come forward, and receive in some more pointed and emphatic manner the homage of her admirers. Long as it was continued, this hint was not taken. To Isola such public demonstrations, accompanied with the showering of premeditated wreaths, and acknowledged by humble bowings and curtsyings, appeared a humiliating act of patronage, rather than an honourable ovation. Urged as she was to confirm the favour of the audience by acceding to their wishes, she remained inflexible. Points there were, and those not trivial ones, upon which Isola might have been turned by a feather: there were others when an earthquake would not shake her indomitable resolution.

As Allan gazed round upon the brilliant and crowded audience, still evidently electri-

fied with delight,—as he beheld the gathered aristocracy of the land, and the still nobler aristocracy of nature—the great and gifted ornaments of literature, art, and science,—all penetrated with one common feeling of admiration,—all evidently pouring forth, as they communed together, their zealous eulogies of the performer ;—as Allan contemplated this flattering triumph—it might almost be said this living apotheosis of Isola, his heart swelled proudly in his bosom, and his whole soul yearned towards her with a mingled sentiment of admiration, gratitude, and affection, as he ejaculated—“ And this glorious creature, this prodigy of genius, as pure in heart as she is unparagoned in talent, is, at the same time, a simple, playful, unaffected girl ; and this favourite of the public, at whose feet the proudest of the earth would be still prouder to do homage, allows me to call her my friend,—terms me her brother, her Camillo,—gives me the precious privilege of calling upon her and enjoying, as often as I like, the society of one who is not less sweet and fascinating in her sportive

moods, than enlightened in her serious converse! And this very night I am permitted to sup with her, that I might endeavour to comfort her, as she jocosely said, for the failure which both her friends and enemies had been so kind as to anticipate. Truly may I deem myself a fortunate man, to be selected for such an honour, to the exclusion of others, whose rank, and station, and longer acquaintance would seem to give them a much better claim to the distinction! Happy Allan Latimer! Kind, good, and condescending Isola!"

Agitated as his bosom had been by the performance of the opera, he felt that it would be a sort of desecration to witness the afterpiece; but he had never seen anything of the sort,—it wanted yet more than an hour of the time fixed for Isola's supper; and as the ballet was reported to be got up with unusual splendour of scenery and decoration, he retained his seat until it began. Only a brief interval, however, elapsed before he quitted it, disgusted by the violent and ungraceful, as well as indelicate, dis-

tortions of the principal dancers, and not a little amazed that demure-looking mothers and modest daughters could quietly sit in the same box with sons, brothers, and admirers, to gaze upon a spectacle which to him appeared, from its licentious character, to be equally repudiated by good taste and a proper feeling of decorum.

Anxious to know how Isola had supported the fatigue and the excitement of her performance, he betook himself, on quitting the Opera House, to her residence in the Quadrant, where he learnt from Crevetti and Harry Freeman, who were already in attendance to offer their congratulations on her brilliant success, that she was lying down in her own chamber, but had sent word, by her maid, that she should shortly make her appearance. While they were yet discussing the transcendent merits of her performance she walked into the room, pale and evidently exhausted in body by the astonishing efforts she had made, but more than usually calm and self-possessed, as if resolved to show how completely she could

make her well-poised mind triumph over corporeal fatigue, and its own recent excitement. "How is it, my brother, that you are here so early?" she demanded, as she smiled graciously upon Allan. "Why, you must have run away from the ballet at its very commencement,—and you told me you had never seen anything of the kind."

"Nay—do not ask me, Isola; you will think me a fool—squeamish—fastidious—puritanical; but I could not—I confess I could not bear—it appeared to me—I thought——" Allan blushed and stammered, and was unable to proceed.

"I see it—I know it—I feel it all," cried Isola: "that blush tells me that you were ashamed to gaze upon such an indecorous spectacle. Do I think you a fool for your bashful scruples? Not I indeed! No! I repeat what I have said before, that I deem one uncontaminated, delicate, and intellectual man, like my good brother Camillo, worth ten thousand of the hard-hearted, coarse-minded voluptuaries and debauchees

by whom it is my unlucky fate to be usually surrounded."

"Hallo! Crevetti," cried Freeman—starting up with a look of mock indignation—"where's your castor? You and I must cut our sticks and bolt, for we are neither of us Sir Charles Grandison,—at least I can answer for myself, and I have strong doubts of you, although in dress and address you bear so startling a resemblance to that ere *preux chevalier*."

"This is not fair," laughed Isola as she cast a glance at the somewhat shabby attire and gaunt figure of old Crevetti, whose disabled arm had increased the usual negligence of his toilet. "Present company, you know, are always excepted; and I should not have invited you to sup with me had I classed you with the *roués* to whom I made allusion,—those burnt-out human torches, who parade themselves offensively before us after they have lost every particle of their light and warmth. No—I have invited none of the titled or golden insolents who call themselves my personal admirers—I

have asked those only whom I can respect, because they have shown a proper respect to me."

"Sir Charles Grandison!" said Freeman to Crevetti—"we may resume our seats; the Signora has bidden none to her feast but prime swells and coves of the first water; so let us hold up our heads, old boy, and make our mugs look as pretty as possible,—for handsome is as handsome does."

"*Cospetto!*" cried Crevetti, who had understood little or nothing of this bantering. "It is the Signora who should *andare colla testa levata*—not you and me. *Dio!* how she looked beautiful, how she played, how she sang *divinamente!* I am still *tutto stupefatto*. *Ecco!* I have but one hand,—this other he is *peggio che mai*; so I could not—(how you say *picchiar le mani?*)—but I cry *Bravissima!* at the top of mine voice, till I am hoarse as an old crow."

"And I," said Freeman, "clapped my hands till they are quite sore,—not with admiration, Signora, so you have thrown away that pretty smile—but with joy that

you should succeed, after so many ill-natured prognostications of your failure."

"Thanks, and another smile," said Isola, holding out her hand to him. "Friendship and good wishes are ever more acceptable to me than admiration. And how did *you* support me, Camillo?"

"Alas! I fear but poorly," replied Allan. "I was too much rapt and absorbed to offer you any other tribute than my deep silence, my tears, and at times my terror."

"Aha! have you then discovered that there is a devil in me, which may be conjured up by some powerful impulse? You are right, you are right! but there is also, thank Heaven! a good angel in my soul, which can control, and trample down, and enchain this evil spirit—though not always without a terrific effort. I know myself, and I suffer not my passions, if I can help it, to break from their prison."

"Since you know yourself, Isola, so well, tell me why your performance in the rehearsals was always so imperfect, so inferior, when you must have felt beforehand that

your success, your glorious triumph, were placed beyond all chance or doubt?"

"Malice, nothing but malice. In certain parties both before and behind the curtain, I observed a disposition to run me down, and I fed their hopes for the moment that I might the more signally disappoint them in the end; for you must be well aware that the gratification of success arises as much—nay—sometimes more, from mortifying our enemies than pleasing our friends. Perhaps it was an unworthy *ruse de guerre*, and I am already sorry for it—but I had been ill used, and, with all my boasted command over my fierce nature, I am a dangerous person to offend."

"In this instance your revenge has been not less innocent than delightful. Yes, I perceive that your self-command is absolute in everything; otherwise, with such unlimited flexibility and power of voice, you could never have resisted the temptation of those flourishes, passages, and *roulades*, which, whether appropriate or not to the occasion and character, are sure to draw

down such thunders of applause. Nothing could be more simple—I might almost say severe—than your singing in *Norma*, and nothing surely was ever half so effective.”

“I have always consulted fitness and expression more than execution, and it might, perhaps, be as well if composers, as well as singers, would recollect a saying of my countryman Beccaria—‘We pay musicians to affect and interest us, rope-dancers to astonish us; and all our musicians want to be rope-dancers.’”

“He was wide awake, and no mistake, when he said that,” cried Freeman. “Performers nowadays seem more anxious to conquer difficulties than to confer pleasure. Now, I hate difficulties of all sorts, and I love pleasure of all sorts; and so, my dear saltatory Sir Charles Grandison, if you feel disposed for a waltz, Harry Freeman’s your partner, and we will spin round to the tune of *Vive la Bagatelle*, or *Vogue la Galère*, whichever on ’em you likes.”

“*Venti mille diavoli!*” ejaculated Crevetti, recoiling from the outstretched arms

of his advancing partner. "My hand—my hand ! if you touch him I go mad : he does nothing this moment but—what you call *palpita, palpita*. Dance with you ! *Corpo di Bacco !* I can hardly bear my hand to sit down." Other guests now made their appearance ; and, when her little party was assembled, Isola, performing the honours of the supper with a wit, cheerfulness, and sparkling vivacity that seemed stimulated rather than subdued by her previous exertions, great and trying as they had been, dismissed them at a late hour, utterly unable to decide whether she was most to be admired for her unrivalled powers as a performer and a singer, or for the mingled suavity and sprightliness that gave such an ineffable charm to every social circle graced and vivified by her presence.

CHAPTER XI.

HARRY FREEMAN was one of those frank, open-hearted, good-tempered, pleasant “fellows about town,” with whom it was impossible to be only slightly acquainted. His inexhaustible good spirits—his manifest and avowed enjoyment of mere existence, apart from all its social distinctions—won upon you, even in spite of himself. The grave and squeamish soon became reconciled to his grimaces, his buffoonery, and his foolish affectation of the slang dialect. Dandies were content to overlook the capricious taste in dress which sometimes placed him in a state of contemptuous antagonism to the last prevailing mode; and even young ladies, in consideration of the general respect which he invariably evinced towards their sex,

were fain to forgive him (though it is apt to be considered an irremissible offence) his uniform avoidance of all individual flirting. Many are the vulgarians whom one instantly detects, however elaborately they may attempt to act the part of gentlemen: Harry's was an opposite and less excusable ambition. It was manifest to the most casual observer that he was a real gentleman assuming the character of a vulgarian. Captivated by his inexhaustible cheerfulness, as well as by his varied talents,—for it would be difficult to mention an accomplishment of which he did not possess a smattering,—Allan Latimer's acquaintance with him quickly ripened into a considerable degree of intimacy, and became extended, by means of his introductions, to several of the most distinguished artists, literati, and men of science,—a society that he was equally proud and delighted to cultivate. Others there were, who, professing to be admirers of Allan's performance on the violoncello, or pleased with his manners and appearance, solicited introductions to him, fore-

most among whom was a certain Mr. Delaval, a man of fifty or upwards, who affected to be a *fanatico per la musica*, who dressed in the height of the fashion, sported a stylish cabriolet with a little cockaded tiger, talked familiarly of his club, of his dining with Lord George, and of his driving his friend Lord Edward down to the Opera. To Allan he had taken a great and sudden liking—it might rather be termed a sort of fatherly regard, for he gave him a world of good advice as to the dangers with which inexperienced young men are sure to be beset in London, urging his own more advanced age, and long conversancy with the snares of the metropolis, as an excuse for the liberty he was taking. Far from feeling offence—for his earnest, whispering, specious manner, as he thus enacted the part of a Mentor, was friendle almost to hugging—Allan expressed his gratitude for such useful admonitions, promising to bear them in mind should he be assailed by any of the perils and temptations against which he was thus kindly warned.

Although some time had now elapsed since Crevetti's hand had been wounded, the prospect of his recovery seemed to be more remote than ever. Fresh imposthumes formed; his general health, which was never very strong, began to give way; and he was finally ordered to the coast, for the double benefit of a change of air and of warm sea-baths. Allan, who had become attached to the kind-hearted old man, was sorry to lose him; but he kept up a correspondence with him, and regularly transmitted his share of the profits arising from the pupils, to whose tuition he had succeeded for a period that did not promise an early termination. Mr. Delaval must have been a remarkably considerate man, for he now called much more frequently than before, in order, as he said, to cheer his solitude, selecting those hours when he was sure to find him at home, and occasionally staying to sup with him, though Allan felt rather nervous at attempting to entertain a man who made no secret of his being a decided *gourmand*.

Just as he was about to leave home one morning for the purpose of giving lessons, Delaval hurried into his room, inquiring, rather anxiously, what had become of their mutual friend, honest Harry Freeman. "He started only yesterday," replied Allan, "for Elmsley Hall in Gloucestershire, where he is to take the lead in getting up some private theatricals, and where, as he told me, he was likely to be detained for a fortnight or three weeks."

"How exceedingly unfortunate!—what a very unlucky *contretemps*!" exclaimed Delaval, with a look of deep disappointment. "He is positively the only fellow of whom I would have asked such a favour,—if, indeed, that can be called a favour which is a mere matter of form."

"What is it?" inquired Allan.

"Why, I have a little bill here—an acceptance of £280—which has two or three weeks to run, and I wanted the money for it to-day, not for myself, but to oblige a friend in distress. Now, Harry would have done it in a minute."

"I doubt that; for I have heard him say that, though he has seldom twenty pounds to spare, he never owes as many shillings."

"My good fellow! do you think I would ask him for the money? not I. It is only his endorsement that I require; for though the acceptor is as good as the Bank, the over-cautious bill-broker refuses to cash it unless there are two names at the back of it,—that is to say, another besides my own."

"And will no other name than Harry Freeman's answer his purpose?"

"Oh, yes; any name in the world would do; for, as I said before, it is a mere matter of form: but I'm foolishly squeamish upon these subjects; I don't like to apply to any but fellows that I know well, and even from some of them I had much rather keep aloof. Now, there's Lord George and Lord Edward would be angry if they knew that I passed them over; but they are both chatter-boxes, and I shouldn't wish the affair to be known, for with my abundant means I ought not to be in want of such a paltry sum"

“My signature, I presume, would not answer the purpose, for I am so little known in London that——”

“One name, I tell you, is as good as another; and as I am so closely pressed for time, I might, perhaps, accept your kind offer if I could be sure that you would not mention the subject to any one.”

“A promise which I am quite ready to give you.”

“Nay, then, in that case, I really don’t see why I should not take your name as well as Harry’s—it’s all a form, and in my opinion a most unnecessary one. Here is the bill—regularly accepted, you see: your endorsement must come under mine, which, of course, I should not have put unless I knew the bill to be good. There, that will do. But harkye, my young friend; although it is an idle ceremony in this instance, don’t do it for any one else. You might fall into bad hands—it might involve you in trouble. Mind! I depend upon your secrecy. I have not a moment to lose, so good morning.” The visitant took his departure, and

Allan set off to give his lessons, scarcely bestowing a second thought on what he had just done; for in his complete ignorance of business, and his confidence in Delaval, who made such a respectable appearance, and appeared to move in such elevated society, he gave implicit credence to his statements, and believed that he had performed an act of simple routine, unattended with risk or responsibility.

On the following morning he received a hurried note from that worthy, stating that he was obliged to go out of town for a few days in order to liberate his friend from his difficulties, and was uncertain as to the precise moment of his return,—a communication which explained his non-appearance for the next fortnight. Two days after the expiration of that period, Allan was not less surprised than alarmed at receiving a visit from an undersized, sinister-looking man of law, dressed in rusty black, who drew out the acceptance from a leathern case and demanded payment of 280*l.*, with some trifling addition for notarial charges, the bill having

been protested for non-payment by the acceptor.

“Good Heavens !” ejaculated Allan, colouring with apprehension ; “ you surely do not expect *me* to pay it !—I have no means in the world of doing so,—I was assured that the acceptor was as good as the Bank. You must look to Mr. Delaval.”

“Much use in that !” replied the claimant with a grim smile. “Get but little tin from him at any time, and just now I suspect he’s playing at hide and seek.”

“Ought you not then to proceed against the acceptor ?”

“Not if we look for payment, for he’s little better than a man of straw. You see, Sir, I act for Mr. Smales, the discounteer and holder of the bill, who may pounce upon the acceptor or drawer, or either of the endorsers, just as he thinks fit ; and he chooses to select you, and has given me orders to proceed against you with all possible rigour, so that I should strongly recommend you to pay the money, or I must take out a writ, and proceed to extremities, which is

always exceedingly painful to my feelings, as it must be, in course, to any gentleman of fine——” A long yawn, followed by an indolent stretching of the arms, prevented the completion of the sentence.

“Will you allow me to observe that this is very unhandsome conduct on the part of Mr. Smales?”

“Oh, certainly, certainly, Sir! I will allow anything you wish, except any delay in the payment of the bill, upon which subject my orders are peremptory.”

“But I have no means of paying it—none in the world.”

“Nothing more likely; there are many others in the same predicament; but we are advised that you have friends quite competent, and I dare say willing, to assist you,—Mr. Freeman, for instance; the old music-master, who is reported to be worth money; and the Italian singing-woman, who must be picking up the cash as fast as she can count it. They say you are her fancy-man, and if so, such a trifle as this can never——”

“I must desire, Sir, that you will not make any disrespectful allusion to Signora Guardia, if your coarse insinuations point towards that lady.”

“What! that affair’s all upon the sly, is it? Well, Sir, well, just as *you* please, but for such a trifling amount, and with such good friends——”

“But I have not the smallest right to apply to any of those parties, nor would I do so on any consideration; besides, they are all absent from London,—the Signora having started two or three days ago for the great musical festival in the North: which circumstances, if they were made known to Mr. Smales, would surely induce him to forego his claim.”

“Oh, come, hang it! you can’t be so green as all that! And if you are, it may be right to tell you that my client is a particularly rum customer, and won’t stand any nonsense; so that, if the money, for the acceptance, the notary’s process, and my little bill of costs, isn’t sent to me before to-night (here’s my card of address), the writ will issue instantly.”

“And what will be the consequence?” The man of law looked at his interrogator with a contemptuous sneer, as if doubting whether the question were put mockingly or in simple ignorance; but having quickly decided in favour of the latter predicament, strange as it seemed to him, he replied, with a blander expression, “Why, my very good Sir, in the first instance you’ll be arrested and taken to a lo—o—o—ock-up-house (a yawn lengthened out the beginning of the word); and if you can’t pay or get bail, you must go to—(yaw—aw—haw!) quod—which, as I said before, would be very painful to a gentleman of my fine—(yaw—aw—haw!) I hardly got any sleep last night—that under-sheriff is the devil’s own fellow for brandy-and-water and cigars; and so, Sir, I wish you a very good morning. Take care of the card.”

“One word before you go. I must look to Mr. Delaval, who has behaved very unhandsomely to me in this affair. Where shall I be likely to find him?”

“Nowhere just now; he’s a dodger for the present, as I told you before.”

"But who is he? What is he?"

"A flat-catcher, *we* call him. But he's not so bad as some. He pays very honourably when he's flush, but that is not the case just now, or he wouldn't be flying kites." With these words the unwelcome visitant gave a familiar nod, as a substitute for a bow, and disappeared, leaving Allan to reflect upon the probable consequences of the dilemma in which he was placed, and from which he did not perceive any immediate mode of extrication. His predominant feeling was one of bitter indignation against the pretended friend by whom he had been so insidiously duped and betrayed; but this gradually subsiding, as the natural generosity of his own disposition suggested that Delaval, after all, might have thought the acceptor a solvent man, he began to consider what chances he had of procuring the money, so as to avoid the disgrace as well as the serious injury of an arrest. His detention, for however short a period, would entail the certain loss of the pupils whom he was now holding together for Crevetti's

advantage as well as his own,—to say nothing of the dishonour, which assumed a much more alarming and degrading aspect to his inexperienced mind than it would have presented to a practised man of fashion.

That his arrest should come to the knowledge of Isola, and of others whose good opinion he was equally anxious to conciliate, was a contingency which he contemplated with feelings of the deepest shame and repugnance. But by what means could he avoid it? A sale of a portion of the stock which constituted his little property would doubtless enable him to pay the amount; but it stood in the joint names of himself and his brother, so that he could do nothing without making known to his family the humiliating position in which he was placed, and distressing the mother to whom he was so affectionately devoted,—an alternative which he could not bear to think of, even for an instant. Mr. Lum was the only man of business with whom he had the slightest acquaintance; but he had been so cavalierly treated by him, that he had little

reason to expect any friendly offices in that quarter; and he wished, moreover, to avoid being interrogated on the subject of Jemima's projected elopement with Captain Harcourt, as he had promised never to reveal her indiscretion to her austere father.

The result of all these unsatisfactory self-communings was a determination to find out Delaval, if possible, and, if not, to write him a letter, insisting upon his immediate payment of the bill; and at the same time to solicit from Mr. Smales, the holder of the acceptance, a delay of a few days. Of the former gentleman he could gather no tidings, nor was time allowed for obtaining a reply to the letter left at his lodgings, even had it been forwarded to him, for Allan was arrested the next morning, and conveyed to a lock-up-house in Cursitor Street, the gloomy aspect of which was little calculated to dispel the deep dejection that now oppressed his soul. Guiltless as he was of all offence, beyond that of a very venial indiscretion, he imagined that an indelible infamy would attach to him should he be conveyed to a

public prison ; and even his present place of confinement, with the two well-secured and carefully guarded doors through which he had passed in the passage, and the iron-barred window of the narrow room upon the ground-floor to which he was inducted, making him look upon himself as a criminal, stung him with a mingled anguish of humiliation and abhorrence.

Justly proud of the unspotted name he had hitherto preserved, and apprehensive of the injurious and false constructions which might be put upon his incarceration, he became every moment more anxious to conceal it, and less able to discern any mode whereby his public exposure could be avoided ; in which conflict of emotions he sat for more than an hour, plunged in a deep and inconsolable perplexity, which, so far from allowing him to devise any scheme for his present conduct or ultimate extrication, hardly left him in possession of his senses. Rallying his faculties at length from this stupor, he wrote in the first instance to Crevetti, detailing what had oc-

curred, after which he indited a still more urgent letter to Delaval, repeating his utter inability to find funds for the payment of this unexpected demand ; and finally, though not without many scruples, he forwarded by post a few lines to Harry Freeman, stating what had passed at the time of the interview with Delaval, as well as the painful result to which it had led, and soliciting his advice as to what course of action it would be most prudent to adopt.

Tranquillised in some degree by this employment of his mind, he took up an old newspaper, smelling strongly of tobacco, which was lying on the table, endeavouring to interest himself in its contents, that so he might be abstracted from his own melancholy thoughts. Instead of succeeding in this object, although his eyes remained fixed upon the journal, he sank into a gloomy reverie of long continuance, until he was aroused by the delivery of a letter which had arrived at his lodgings immediately after his departure, and had been forwarded by the landlady, who knew his present

address from having heard the orders given to the hackney-coachman, as he was driven away in company with the bailiffs. Recognising the handwriting of Walter, he tore it open, and read as follows:—

“ Woodcote, Tuesday.

“ MY DEAR ALLAN !

“ Our beloved mother was seized three hours ago with a most alarming fit ! God knows whether she will ever recover. At present she is speechless ; but she retains her faculties, for she has just written with pencil the words—‘ Send instantly for Allan—I must see him before I die.’ You had better come down *immediately*. Nevertheless, I will write again to-morrow. I have no time to add more.

“ Yours, in the deepest affliction,

“ WALTER LATIMER.

“ P.S.—I have broken open the letter to say that Dawson thinks we need not by any means despair, should there be no *second* attack. W. L.”

As he finished the perusal of these heart-

rending lines, the letter dropped from his grasp, and the tears rained upon his folded hands, while he sat with his eyes fixed upon the floor in a mute agony of grief. Starting from this prostration of mind, he snatched up the letter, and essayed to read it a second time, to see whether its reperusal might afford him a faint ray of hope; but he was so blinded by his tears, and his hand so tremulous with agitation, that he could not at first succeed; nor, when he had at length accomplished his purpose, could he find anything to alleviate the pang of wretchedness, the unutterable misery with which he was overwhelmed. Now did he recall with bitter self-upbraidings that he had left Woodcote without receiving his mother's parting blessing, without even bidding her adieu; and, although he had constantly written to her since his arrival in London, his conscience stung him as if he had been the most negligent, the most unfilial, the most unnatural, of sons.

"And this kindest, best, most affectionate of mothers," exclaimed Allan, smiting his

forehead in a paroxysm of accusing penitence, "not only forgives my unkindness in quitting my home, but thinks of me before all others when she is suddenly hurried to the brink of the grave, and declares that she must see me before she dies. And this, as if on purpose to accumulate horrors upon my unhappy head, this is made known to me when I am locked up in prison like a felon—when I must leave her to suppose that her dying request was unheeded by her ungrateful son,—that I, upon whom she has never gazed except with a smile of tenderness—I, whom she has so carefully reared—I, whom she has ever so fondly loved——By Heaven ! I must, I will fly to her bedside—nothing—no consideration on earth shall prevent me !"

Thus soliloquising, while he rapidly paced the room in a state of intense excitement, he suddenly threw up the sash, and made a violent wrench at one of the iron bars, in the hope of displacing it ; but, finding it as immovable as the house itself, he stamped upon the floor with a feeling of mortification that now amounted to rage. In the midst of his

exacerbation, a thought occurred to him, or rather a chimera, which could only have been suggested by despair acting upon inexperience. He closed the sash, pulled the bell, and desired to speak to the master of the house, on the appearance of which functionary, a tall, raw-boned man of a most forbidding aspect, he placed the letter in his hand, desired him to read it, and then, adjuring him by his love of his own mother if she were still living, by his respect for her memory if she were dead, by every consideration of Christian charity, he implored permission, in the most impassioned tones, to hurry down by that night's mail-coach to Woodcote, that he might receive his mother's blessing, solemnly swearing that he would return in two days, and again place himself in safe custody.

Difficult would it be to describe the scorn, surprise, and wrath, mingled in the countenance of the party thus addressed, as he replied, "Why, what a precious jackass you must think me! Do I look so jolly green, such a downright dummy, as all that comes

to? Call me away from my brandy-and-water, and my game of cribbage, to try and come over me with a parcel of living mothers, and dying mothers, and dead mothers, and blessings, and such rubbish as that! Curse me if ever I met with a bigger piece of gammon in all my life!"

"Nay, for pity's sake! for Heaven's sake! do not leave me. If you will but grant my request, I swear to you, by all that is great and good—all that is sacred——"

"Humbug!" exclaimed the fellow, rudely shaking off the petitioner, who endeavoured to detain him by the arm, and banging the door after him, as he flounced angrily out of the room.

"Then there is no hope!" groaned Allan, as he threw himself into a chair, buried his face in his hands, and sobbed in a burst of uncontrollable despair. So absorbing was his distress that he did not notice an altercation in the passage, until it became so clamorous and turbulent as to force itself upon his attention. On quitting the little back room in the manner we have described,

the sheriff's officer discovered that the janitor, who had a seat inside the second door of the passage, was not only fast asleep upon his post, but that, when he was aroused, by no very gentle shake, he was much too drunk to be left as the custodian of the house. He accordingly summoned another of his myrmidons from below to take the place of the delinquent,—a substitution which the latter resisted with so much violence, that his two assailants found considerable difficulty in forcing him from his post, and dragging him below, preparatory to his being locked up in the back kitchen until he should recover his sobriety.

While they were yet scuffling and wrangling together upon the stairs, Allan opened the room-door in order to ascertain the cause of the disturbance; and, seeing the coast clear, the possibility of making his escape flashed athwart his mind with all the speed of lightning. Hurrying forward upon tip-toe, he turned the key of the inner door, which had been left in the lock, and with a thrilling bosom reached the intermediate

passage ; but his blood again ran cold with a blank and deadly misgiving as he perceived that there was no key to the outer door, which was securely locked. Not wishing to be detected in a vain attempt to escape, and well aware that there was not a moment to be lost, he was on the point of hurrying back to his place of confinement, when it struck him that the same key might possibly open both doors. Withdrawing it from the first, he inserted it noiselessly in the second lock ; he turned it ; the bolts receded ; he opened the outer door, closing it softly behind him ; and, while his heart gave a leap as if it would have sprung from his bosom, he found himself in the street, and at liberty.

Agile and quick-footed at all times, his speed was now that of a flying antelope ; the buoyancy of his spirit seemed to have given levity to his whole frame ; and his feet scarcely touched the ground till he plunged into a crowded thoroughfare, where he was compelled to check the rapidity of his progress. Again would he have turned

aside into some of the less-frequented streets, but, recollecting that, should he be pursued, he had a better chance of avoiding detection in a crowd, he continued his course, restricting his advance to a quick walk. As he had shut the door of his little room on making his escape, as well as both those in the passage, he flattered himself that his flight might not be discovered for some time; and even if it were, nothing was so improbable as that he should be again apprehended before he reached the Post-Office, where he hoped to find the mail. He had now obtained a good start; his pursuers would be utterly ignorant of the direction he had taken; and he felt no compunction or alarm as to the possible consequences of his evasion, since he fully intended to replace himself in custody the very moment that he should be enabled to return from Woodcote.

With these consolatory impressions he hastened forwards to the Post-Office, where he was informed that an hour would elapse before the arrival and departure of the mail.

Small as was the chance of his discovery during that short period, he determined not to incur any unnecessary risk, but ensconced himself in the darkest corner of an obscure coffee-house, where he called for some refreshment, although he was too much agitated to taste it when it was placed before him. Emerging from this retreat as the appointed time drew nigh, he returned to the Post-Office, and was looking out for the coach he wanted, when, to his utter horror and amazement, his eyes fell upon the tall, raw-boned sheriff's officer from whose house he had so recently made his escape. That crafty personage, recollecting the eager and repeated declarations of his prisoner that he wished to travel to Woodcote by that night's mail, had no sooner been apprised of his elopement than he judged that the most likely chance for effecting his recaption was to lie in wait for him at the Post-Office, and the result proved that he had not been mistaken. His suspicious, peering eye having instantly detected the runaway, his long legs were in strenuous pursuit when Allan commenced his second

flight, which he did with a velocity not less vehement than the first.

Fortunately for the fugitive, it was a wet, foggy evening; and as he darted down a narrow street, ignorant whither it might lead him, none of the few wayfarers offered to interrupt his passage, although his pursuer repeatedly and lustily shouted "Stop thief!"—Active as he was, however, Allan had presently the mortification to find that his follower was gaining upon him; he could hear his footsteps and his outcries at no great distance behind;—and as he rushed through a narrow covered passage by which he was momentarily concealed, and emerged into an obscure alley, he bolted into a house the door of which stood ajar, and instantly closed it, hoping that the party who held him in chase would continue his precipitous career without suspecting the stratagem. To his immeasurable relief of mind, he heard him hurry past the door, and listened to his receding footsteps and fainter cries until both became inaudible, when, deeming himself safe for the immediate moment, he pre-

pared to leave the house and run back to the Post-Office, in the hope of still being in time for the coach.

At this instant several of the neighbouring church clocks struck the hour of eight,—sounds which fell heavily upon his heart, for he knew that he had now lost all hope of leaving London by that night's mail. Having thus no object to urge him forth from his present place of concealment, which seemed a quiet and secure one, the house appearing to be unoccupied, he determined to lie *perdu* a little longer, deeming it by no means impossible that the sheriff's officer, turning upon his steps, might prowl about the neighbourhood in the hope of pouncing a second time upon his prey.

Just as he was at length about to quit the premises, he heard two men whispering together outside the door, one of whom placed his hand upon the lock as if about to enter, and his heart again sank within him, for he feared that his adversary had discovered his place of concealment; with which impression he stole stealthily up the stairs, and, looking

into a back room upon the first floor, was enabled to discern by the dim light of its single window,—for night was now setting in,—that it contained no furniture except a table in the centre, and that there was a closet in the farther corner. To this he crept, and drew the door gently after him, intending to wait until the men below, whose visit to an unfurnished house was not likely to be of long continuance, should have taken their departure. It was some comfort to conclude that they were not in pursuit of him, since they made no attempt to search the premises, or even to ascend the stairs ; but, on the other hand, they evinced no disposition to depart, for the fumes of tobacco penetrated to his closet, and he caught their voices at intervals, although his eager ears were unable to distinguish a single word of their discourse, so low was the tone in which they conversed. From the total absence of any sound of wheels in the alley, he concluded that it was not a thoroughfare for carriages, and he almost wished that he could have heard their rumbling, so trying to his nerves

became the mysterious whispering of these strangers, such an evil purpose might fairly be implied from the circumstances of their meeting, and so completely did he feel himself in their power.

After a delay of some continuance, which appeared still longer from the impatient agitation of his mind, he heard the rolling as of a barrow without ; it stopped—two taps were given to the door, which was immediately opened ; additional voices, but still in the same earnest, subdued, whispering tone, buzzed upwards from the passage ; and in another minute Allan felt a thrill of alarm tingling through his whole frame as several footsteps were heard treading heavily up the creaking stairs. And yet, he argued to himself—for in any crisis of danger the operations of the electrified mind are carried on with an inconceivable rapidity—I have no reason to suppose that these men are aware of my presence ; I have only to remain quiet, and in all probability I shall not be discovered ;—they may not be employed on any lawless purpose ; and if they are, and

should chance to ferret me out, I am young and strong, and shall have the less reason to fear them, for the guilty are always cowards. While these thoughts were flashing across him, the door opened, and he became conscious that a light had been introduced into the room, for a ray gleamed into the closet through a circular hole occasioned by the dropping of a knot from the deal door. By looking through this aperture, small as it was, he could see everything that passed in the room, without being himself detected; and an irresistible curiosity having presently riveted his eye to the minute opening, he saw that three suspicious-looking fellows had entered the room, one of them bearing a sack upon his shoulders, which he threw upon the table, exclaiming, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow with the sleeve of his fustian coat —“Curse the cove! who’d ha’ thought he was so heavy? A precious trundle I’ve had with the barrow. He warn’t an easy go-a-longer, I can tell you that; but your dead uns are always as lumpy as blue pigeon. Jemmy! you’ve brought some lush, some

regular max, ha'n't you? for I've had no grub since we started."

"Stow that," replied the man thus addressed—"we'll have a regular blow out by and bye. Hide the glim, spoony! don't you see there's a glaze?" And he pointed to the window.

"It's a back slum, and looks out upon a dead wall."

"That's it, and no mistake; then we'll have t'other glim, that we may see what we're about." With these words he turned back the shade of a dark lantern, and, placing it upon the narrow mantel, so that its light fell upon the table, he continued—"Come, my hearties! stir your stumps: we've no time to lose—open the sack, kiddy! and out with him." The sack was untied, when Allan, shuddering with horror, saw a dead body unceremoniously dragged forth and stretched upon the table, while one of the men, who by his dress seemed to be a sort of leader, bowing to the corpse with a mock solemnity, exclaimed—"Your sarvant, Captain; you're out of twig just

now, but we'll soon make a prime swell of you."

"What dark and atrocious deed have these miscreants been committing?" thought Allan: "they may be murderers, and I perchance may be the destined instrument of Providence for detecting their guilt and bringing the villains to justice." In this belief he fixed his eyes upon the faces of each in succession, that he might swear to their identity, should he become a witness against them; during which scrutiny a momentary silence in the room thrilled him with a fresh alarm, for he heard with a painful distinctness the ticking of his own watch, and had too much reason to fear, should the sound lead to his discovery, that the desperadoes, endeavouring to secure the concealment of one crime by the commission of another, would put him to death in a sort of self-defence. In the rapid flashes of thought, snatching at safety as eagerly as it conjured up ideas of danger, it now occurred to him that the men, after all, might be only body-snatchers, who had exhumed a corpse for anatomical purposes,—a supposi-

tion which brought such a relief to his mind that he could almost have smiled at his own previous terrors and misgivings.

This illusion was, however, dispelled still more quickly than it had been formed, for, a parcel of clothes being emptied upon the floor from another bag, the leader of the party proceeded to array the corpse, calling for the different articles of dress as he required them. "Is all the toggery right?" was his first question; to which an affirmative answer having been given, the body was carefully dressed in what appeared to be a handsome and fashionable suit of clothes. "Now for the jasey and the castor," said the mysterious valet, placing a wig and hat upon the head of the deceased. "There you are, Captain," he continued—"togg'd out to the nines, and as prime a swell as e'er a flashman in London; so now, my lads, we'll just have a snatch at the prog down-stairs, and whet our whistles,—for this dead-man's work rather turns a fellow's stomach,—and then we'll make a fresh start."

“ And when are we to share the swag ?” asked one of his companions. “ All in good time, Jemmy ; it’s a prime stake, depend on’t, and there’ll be lots of blunt for all of us, if nobody blows the gaff. If they do, and we’re all in the same boat, it’s a lagging matter at the least.” To the inexpressible relief of their closeted observer, the party now went down-stairs, taking with them the candle, but leaving the dark-lantern on the mantelshelf ; and their voices were again indistinctly heard from below, as they discussed the viands and the liquor to which one of them had made allusion.

Allan was now more bewildered than ever as to what course he should pursue. Prudence, not to say the possible chance of self-preservation, suggested that he should seize the moment while they were engaged with their meal for stealing down-stairs and attempting to quit the house without discovery ; but, on the other hand, an irrepressible curiosity to witness the conclusion of the adventure, and a brave feeling that his duty to the public required him to ascertain, if

possible, its object, and the names of the agents engaged in so suspicious a transaction, incited him to remain.

Little conversant as he was with the slang language, he had gathered enough from the lips of the last speaker to feel assured that he had been engaged in some nefarious deed which would subject himself and his fellows to a heavy punishment if it should ever be revealed,—an admission which strengthened his desire to solve its mystery, and assist in the conviction of the culprits. While thus communing with himself, he felt vehemently tempted to quit his hiding-place for a single moment, that he might take a survey of the body, his present line of vision only allowing him to see the back part of the head as it lay extended before him. Recollecting that his footsteps were not likely to be heard by the party below, who were in the front room, and busily engaged with their potations, he summoned courage, stole from the closet, took the lantern in his hand, and, holding it full in the face of the deceased, started back in utter

amazement as his eyes fell upon the form and features of Captain Harcourt, whose intended elopement with Jemima Lum he had so recently frustrated. At that time he had appeared in perfect health, and, though the closed eyes and the cadaverous hues of death made some alteration in his appearance, there could be no question as to his identity, the singular scar upon his cheek and throat being now more conspicuous than ever, while his clothes, remarkable for their peculiar cut and colour, were obviously the same that he had worn on that occasion.

Considering himself to be holding a sort of inquest on the body, Allan made no scruple of feeling in the coat-pockets, whence he drew several letters, all directed to "Captain Harcourt, Hill Street, Richmond,"—as well as a silver-mounted case, filled with cards bearing the same name and address. As he hastily returned these to the pockets, his eye fell upon a handsome chain,—he drew forth the watch to which it was appended, and read the same words en-

graved upon the outer case. One of the dead man's fingers bore a showy ring, which he also wished to examine, but, revolted by the cold, clammy feeling of the hand, and recoiling from the very notion of tampering any longer with a corpse, he gave up the attempt, and, being quite satisfied as to the identity of the party, hurried back to his lair.

Fortunate was it that he did so, for footsteps were immediately afterwards heard ascending; the three men reappeared, flushed with their recent potations, and, replacing the dressed body in the sack which had brought it, not without sundry coarse and unfeeling jokes as to the flashy appearance of the Captain, they carried it down-stairs, where, as Allan conjectured, they again consigned it to the barrow, for he could distinguish the trundling of its receding wheel. Eager to fathom the mystery, he was about to follow in instant pursuit, when he found that the men had not all quitted the house,—a noise, as if of packing up the drinking-vessels that had been used, still proceeding from the lower room. Knowing

that discovery would effectually defeat his purpose, he waited until these sounds had subsided, when he crept noiselessly down the stairs, gently opened the street door, which had been left unfastened, and found himself in the alley, hardly able to explore his way, so dark was the foggy night, and so few the lamps in that obscure and neglected passage. Pressing, however, forwards in the direction that the barrow had taken, so far as he could judge by the sound, and flattering himself that, as his movements were quicker, he must soon overtake it, he presently emerged into a wider and better lighted street, which crossed the alley at right angles. Here he remained listening, utterly at a loss which way to turn, especially when a passing watchman declared, in answer to his inquiries, that, although he had been pacing up and down for some time, he had neither seen a barrow nor encountered any suspicious characters. Unsatisfied with this reply, Allan hurried along the pavement to some distance, first in one direction, then in the other; but, not succeeding in the object

of his search, though it was continued until the tolling of the midnight hour, he gave up the pursuit, turned into a coffee-house that he found still open, and engaged a bed, to which he retired, completely exhausted, both in mind and body, by the strange adventures which had crowded more distress, excitement, and mysterious wonder into the last few hours than it had been his lot to experience in the whole course of his previous life.

END OF VOL. II.

London: Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES and SONS, Stamford Street.

ADAM BROWN,

THE MERCHANT.

BY THE



AUTHOR OF BRAMBLETYE HOUSE, &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

“When novelty’s the rage, and love of change,
And things are doated on because they’re strange,
How shall he fare whose unaspiring hack
Jogs on the broadway and the beaten track,
Leaps o’er no moral fence, nor dares to prance
In the wild regions of untried romance?”

CHARLES MOORE,

VOLUME III.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1843.

London :
Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES and Sons,
Stamford Street.

ADAM BROWN.

CHAPTER I.

NOT without difficulty, even when enjoying the composure of his bed, could Allan deliberate upon the events of the past day, for they had succeeded one another with such rapidity as almost to bewilder his faculties. His unexpected arrest would have been obliterated from his memory by the all-absorbing interest of his mother's alarming seizure, had it not prevented, though only for a short time, his seeking the means of immediately flying to her bed-side ; and even this object, previously so paramount in his mind, yielded to the harrowing excitement of the spectacle he had witnessed in the unfurnished

house, and the life-involving danger to which it had exposed him, for he vehemently suspected that his discovery might have led to his death.

Before he retired to bed he had again read over Walter's letter, to the postscript of which, intimating the possibility of his mother's recovery, he clung with a fervent and impassioned hope, trusting to see it realized ere many hours had elapsed, as he purposed starting by the early coach for Cheltenham. Somewhat calmed by this cheering anticipation, his reverting thoughts endeavoured to suggest some solution of the mystery connected with the body of Harcourt, who, as they gave him his title of Captain, must have been well known to the men surrounding his remains, notwithstanding the brutal levity with which they treated them. That they were murderers, however, as he had at first suspected, his present reflections led him to doubt, for he had seen no marks of recent outrage about the body, nor did the features indicate, by their expression, a violent or struggling death. The fellow who had

wheeled the barrow and carried up the body looked like a low ruffian ; but the two others, spite of their slang language and vulgar bearing, did not quite answer his notion of the regular felon and desperado, ready for bloodshed or any other atrocity. Yet had they admitted that their dark deed brought them within the heavy penalties of the law,—a liability which he could understand much more easily than the considerable booty which, as they themselves had also intimated, was to result from the death of Harcourt, whom Freeman had represented as a penniless and unprincipled adventurer. Why they should disinter the body—for it appeared to have been buried ; indeed he had seen them remove a portion of the shroud—and so carefully array it in the Captain's fashionable clothes, was a mystery that baffled every attempt at solution. Busied in conjectures, and still agitated by the late exciting occurrences, some time elapsed before he could close his eyes ; and when he at length sank into a troubled and broken slumber of little more than an hour's continuance,

it was finally dispelled by the summons of the porter, who had been ordered to call him in time for the early coach.

Now that he was on the point of quitting London, now that his heart thrilled and yearned with the hope of shortly embracing his mother and Walter, the fear of being again arrested by the sheriff's officer, improbable as it was, amounted to a nervous agony. Afraid to look his fellow-passengers in the face, he huddled himself up into a corner of the coach, drawing his hat over his eyes, and feigning to be asleep, until he had furtively peered at each in succession, and ascertained that there was no ground for his misgivings; and even then, apprehensive that there might be an enemy on the outside, he remained muffled up until, when they descended to take refreshments, he had strictly scrutinised their persons, after which process he regathered courage, and was unvisited by any further alarms.

Reaching Cheltenham without accident, he took horse immediately, and rode full speed to Woodcote. his bosom throbbing, as he

hastily dismounted at the gate of the cottage, with mingled hope and fear, though the latter predominated when, casting his eye up to the window of his mother's bedroom, he saw that it was partly open. All doubt was quickly converted into certainty and delight, for Walter rushed suddenly from the house, exclaiming, as he folded him in his arms, "She is safe—she is safe,—she is out of danger!"

"Thank God!" sobbed Allan, pressing his brother to his heart, while both freely wept the sweet tears of joy and gratitude, and embraced each other with a cordiality so ardent that for some time it could find no vent in words.

Anxious as he was to conceal every emotion that might agitate the patient, Allan again melted into tears of joy at finding his beloved mother so much better than he had expected, her faculties never having been impaired, and her speech being restored, although it was still slightly affected by the paralytic attack with which she had been seized. Her medical attendant, seeing no

reason to anticipate a second attack, had declared that even this trivial hesitation would gradually disappear, and now pronounced her out of all immediate danger. These tidings allowed him to enjoy a long and tender colloquy with the patient, who felt so surprisingly revived as well as rejoiced by his presence, that she would willingly have continued it to a late hour, had not the gentle and the thoughtful Walter reminded her that she might be exerting herself beyond her strength, and that Allan, whose looks betrayed the fatigue of his journey, would do well to retire to rest. Following up this suggestion, Walter took a book from the table, and commenced reading the evening prayers, selecting the same special thanksgiving for deliverance from any great danger which his mother had so feelingly recited when he had escaped being drowned in the brook. Grateful for her comparative restoration, as well as for his own deliverance from recent perils, Allan's heart responded to every word, as it fell upon his ear with the soft and touching accents of his brother;

and, after fresh embraces, retiring to bed in a far different frame of mind from the fearful perturbation of the previous night, he soon forgot all his fatigues and anxieties in a sleep which continued unbroken until Walter entered his room on the following morning to apprise him that he had already seen his mother, who declared that the sight of Allan must have operated as a charm, so wonderfully did she feel strengthened and restored.

Leisure having been afforded him, during his long drive to Cheltenham, to meditate upon the circumstances of his flight from London, he began to fear that his evasion from the custody of the sheriff's officer, viewed perhaps by the law as tantamount to prison-breaking, might assume a graver character of offence, and subject him to more serious responsibilities, than he had ever contemplated. Acting upon the impulse of the moment, under feelings of high excitement, he had, in fact, never paused to weigh the possible consequences of his proceeding; but as these forced themselves upon his attention, he determined to make the best

atonement in his power by returning with as little delay as possible to his former place of confinement,—a resolution which he was still more eager to execute now that he had seen his mother, and had ascertained that she was in a fair way of recovering.

Not for worlds would he have distressed her affectionate heart—to say nothing of the disgrace it would inflict upon himself—by relating what had happened ; but though he might suppress a portion of the truth, he disdained to utter a falsehood, and therefore declared that his engagement with Crevetti, and the necessity of keeping together his pupils, would compel him, however painful to his feelings, to tear himself away from Woodcote that night. In sooth, this was one, though not the most powerful, of the motives that urged him back, for Crevetti's means of subsistence, as well as his own, would be seriously compromised by his prolonged absence.

While walking in the garden with his brother after they had breakfasted together, he advanced the same reasons for his declin-

ing to call upon any of their neighbours during his short and hurried visit, and then, turning the conversation, for he felt it painful to have any concealments from one who had hitherto enjoyed his perfect confidence, and had done nothing to forfeit it, he suddenly exclaimed, "And now, dear Walter, you must tell me all the news of Woodcote, enlightening me, first and foremost, as to the state of your love affair with Ellen Molloy."

"Upon that subject I have little or nothing to communicate, save that our marriage, I am sorry to say, is as far off as ever. And yet I know not why I should say I am sorry, for I am very, very happy in being recognised as her lover ; and as to dear Ellen, you would hardly know her again, so much is she improved in health, spirits, and appearance since you left us. You will see her of course before you fly away again ?"

"I had rather not—indeed it would be much better that I shouldn't."

"Better ! Why so ?"

“Oh, I don’t know ; the parting of friends is always painful. I ran away before, you know, without bidding her adieu. Yet, if you wish it, dear Walter, I will call upon her. Somehow or other—whence it arises I cannot tell—but methinks our parting now would not be so painful to me as it would have been when I last left Woodcote.”

Had Allan been aware of the state of his own heart he would have attributed this diminished interest not solely to the effects of separation, and to the altered position in which Ellen stood as the affianced wife of his brother, but to that profound admiration and deep regard for Isola, of which, though it was as yet unsuspected by himself, the seeds had been already implanted in his bosom, and were strengthened in their development by every fresh interview. But we must not anticipate the progress and results of this unconscious attachment. “Latterly,” pursued Walter, “both Ellen and myself were made very unhappy by the pointed attentions of Sir Gregory Cavenish’s son, during the continuance of which

Captain Molloy seemed disposed to withdraw the conditional sanction that he had given to our marriage; but as the coxcomb has now accompanied his father and sister to London, and has, apparently, abandoned a flirtation which had probably no other object than his temporary amusement, the Captain is as friendly to us as he was before."

"Did dear Ellen—did Ellen Molloy, I mean—imagine him to be serious in his attentions?"

"*That* she could not tell; but, knowing him to be impertinent in his admiration as well as stupidly fulsome in his flattery, she viewed him with daily increasing disgust, and was never so happy as when he turned his back upon Woodcote. For my part, I am half sorry that he did not persevere in his advances, for if he had been pressed upon her acceptance,—a contingency which we strongly apprehended,—she had consented to marry me at once."

"And what has become of the poor mad lady, of whose strange introduction to the

Manor-House you wrote me such an interesting account?"

"She remains there still, quite restored in bodily health, and contriving to charm every one by her personal beauty and the elegance of her manners and deportment, but without any improvement in her mental malady, though the Cheltenham doctor maintains his opinion that her alienation is not of a permanent character."

"And has no discovery yet been made as to who she is, and whence she comes?"

"None whatever."

"How very singular! And does our worthy friend like this addition to his household?"

"In my opinion—yes, for it affords him something to think of, something to do, and assists him in killing—what he begins to feel as his greatest enemy—time."

"And what of our other friends?"

"Captain Molloy has lately returned from Cheltenham, whence he seems to have brought a supply of cash,—how obtained I cannot tell you,—for he has been making an

unusual parade of bank-notes, and has decked out Matilda in a showy pelisse and bonnet that are the admiration of all Woodcote. Mr. Crab is much as you left him—kind and generous as ever to those whom he respects, caustic and biting as ever towards those whom he cannot esteem. The old soldier, as they call him, or, in other words, Farmer Chubbs, whose drunken habits seem to be incurable, has had an execution in his house, and is going to rack and ruin as fast as he can, so that poor Fanny's marriage with Harry Groombridge is not much more advanced than my own."

Walter then made brief mention of several of their poorer neighbours, and of the trifling services which he and his mother had been enabled to render them, concluding with the statement that their little cob was in capital condition, and expressing a hope that his brother would walk down to see him in the Friar's Field, of which Mr. Brown had kindly permitted him to have the run. "In the mean time," continued Walter, "pray admire this garden-chair

that I have constructed for our dear mother, and this new hencoop, and the ornamented front of the tool-house,—the last triumphs of my skill in carpentry; reserving, however, no small portion of your admiration for my exertions as a gardener, especially when you recollect that I have no one now to assist me. Here are my blanching-pots for the sea-kale of which our dear mother is so fond, and the plants are well earthed up: this is my asparagus-bed; does it not do me credit? This winter spinach I have left to run to seed; look at these cauliflowers—but you don't care for vegetables, you never did. Well, then, come and give me credit for my flowers. See! I have already placed hoop-arches with matting over my tulips, ranunculuses, and anemones, to defend them from the rain and sun;—under these bell glasses I have planted some tender annuals of the sorts that mother likes best;—did you ever see anything finer than my double wall-flowers, especially this Bloody Warrior?—and my poppies, and common hyacinths, and sweet-peas, will, I hope, receive a due

meed of your commendation, considering how many I have gathered, for I have always had a handsome nosegay to place upon mother's table, besides carrying one across the common, almost every day, for dear Ellen. Ah, Allan! you little fancy how often I have thought of you, and wished with a sigh that you were again by my side, when I have been tending your favourite flowers, or tying up the lettuces that you were so fond of in your salads."

As Allan wrung his hand in silent acknowledgment, his heart yearned with more than usual fondness towards the brother who, even in cultivating his garden, made so lowly an occupation stimulate his highest and best affections, thus literally uniting earth to that heaven which may be attained even here below, in domestic love. What a contrast, he thought, do these simple pleasures, and Walter's tranquil country life, present to the glittering gaities, the tumultuous dissipation of London, and the anxieties, temptations, and perilous adventures in which I have been condemned to

figure since I left my quiet home ! Even, however, while thus moralizing, his inmost heart whispered that there were charms and attractions in the metropolis which might go far towards compensating the risks to which its residents were exposed : for in what other locality could one hope to find an Isola Guardia ? Too modest, however, or perhaps too subtle, to assign its superiority to this allurements, he attributed it to the greater intellectual advancement, the more widely diffused refinement and urbanity of manners, the easier access to the masterpieces of art and enlightened society,—to those manifold resources, in short, for a man of cultivated taste, which none but a large capital can supply. Dear as Walter was to him at this moment, perhaps more so than he had ever been before, his perceptions, rendered keen, not to say fastidious, by his own residence in the metropolis, did not fail to notice in him a simplicity of character and unfashionable homeliness of attire that imparted to him a certain degree of rusticity. Was he secretly sensible of

his own superiority in these respects, as he saw his brother kneeling down in the dirt to tie up a flower? We know not; but we can confidently reiterate that, whatever might have been his impression as to Walter's occupation and external appearance, his love and his respect for the inner man, so far from suffering diminution, had gathered increase.

Returning to the house, Allan passed a long and most delightful day in the society of his family, and, after having received his mother's solemn blessing, accompanied by the most affectionate embraces, he took his leave, not without tears on all sides, threw himself into the evening mail, and was presently whirling along the road, distressed in feeling by the recent parting, and saddened by the thought that his journey was to terminate in a prison, whence he saw no immediate prospect of being extricated.

On the morning of his arrival in London he was driven to Cursitor Street, filled with anxious qualms as to the penalty of his recent escapade, though his voluntary sur-

render, he thought, ought to plead in mitigation of his offence. This apology he had begun to urge on his arrival, when the sheriff's officer rudely interrupted him by exclaiming, with a sardonic grin, "You're a precious humbug, ar'n't you? Voluntary surrender! I like that! Hang me if I ever knew a more canting cove! Much I should have seen of you and your voluntary surrender if the bill hadn't been taken up and paid with costs."

"Paid! you astonish me. When?—how?—by whom?"

"Come, come, I'm not to be gammoned by a regular knowing one setting up for a flat. What! you don't know, I suppose, that it was all put up last night, and the blunt and costs sent by the singing woman?"

"By Signora Guardia?"

"Ay, it was some such outlandish name as that;—but I tell you what, my kiddy! if I had caught you t'other night when you gave me leg-bail at the Post Office,—and hang me if I know where you bolted to!—

I warrant I would have cured you for one while of coming the sneak upon me !”

So saying he turned on his heel and walked off in high dudgeon, leaving Allan to congratulate himself on being delivered from the clutches of such a coarse and vindictive gaoler, and not a little bewildered as to the unexpected discharge of the debt for which he had been incarcerated.

Eager as he was to solve this mystery by hurrying to Isola, he would not do so until he had first proceeded to his own lodgings to arrange his toilet, for he had latterly paid an unusual attention to his dress whenever he intended to call upon her, without suspecting the secret motive that rendered him so scrupulous. As Isola, who never kept very matutinal hours, had not yet made her appearance, he seated himself in the drawing-room, and, taking up a newspaper in order to beguile the time, began carelessly to peruse its contents, when his attention was arrested by the following paragraph:—
“ Fatal Accident on the River.—As Captain Harcourt of Richmond, and two friends,

were rowing themselves to London, late on Thursday evening, the wherry struck against Putney Bridge and capsized, throwing the whole party into the water. Two of the gentlemen were saved by clinging to the pier, but we regret to state that the Captain was unfortunately drowned. Although rewards have been offered for the recovery of the body, it had not been found at a late hour last night."

"So, then," thought Allan, as he reperused the paragraph, "the poor man's death was not occasioned by violence or outrage of any sort, as I for a moment suspected, and I have done injustice to the fellows who made so free with his remains. His decease is accounted for, but still the enigma is but partially solved; for why should his body have been undressed and wrapped in a shroud, only to be again attired in his own garments? why should it have been conveyed, with so many circumstances of secrecy, to an obscure, uninhabited house in the City? and, above all, why should the men represent themselves as being engaged

in an illegal and most perilous enterprise, if, having found the corpse in the river, they were merely going to convey it to his friends, to claim the reward announced in this paragraph? That such was their object would seem the most probable supposition; but why not pursue it openly? why dress up the deceased with so much——? And now I recollect that the clothes were perfectly dry,—the letters that I took from his pockets were unwet, unsoiled,—none of his attire bore the appearance of having been immersed in the water. Every part of the adventure, therefore, appears to be involved in a deeper mystery than ever, except his death; but, that being satisfactorily explained, I know not that I am bound to take any further notice of the occurrence, strange and suspicious as it may still seem.”

“ Ah, Camillo, my brother! have I then found the runaway?” exclaimed the silvery voice of Isola, as she flew into the room, holding out both hands to welcome her visitant, and throwing back her head with one of those irresistible and sunny smiles which

cannot be described, and which, when once seen, could never be forgotten.

“ Yes, Isola, here I am once more, and indebted to you, if I have been rightly informed, for my liberty : but before I thank you for your generosity, let me ask who informed you of my imprisonment.”

“ Your landlady communicated it to Antonio, from whom I learnt it on my return to London, when, not deeming it decorous that a *prima donna* should have a brother under arrest for so trifling a sum, I sent for an attorney, and desired him to save me from that disgrace by effecting your liberation.”

“ Isola ! my dear sister, since you allow me to call you so,—you are all kindness, all goodness,—still more noble and high souled than I had thought : my heart must thank you, for language would but feebly express my gratitude. But, indeed, indeed, this debt must not remain. You have more than once confessed that you valued every pound, because you viewed it as the means of expediting your return.”

“ Yes,—that I might again behold my

Italian Camillo ; and I have advanced this trifle that I might have the pleasure of again seeing my English Camillo. Is it not well bestowed ?" And she again shook both his hands with a welcoming cordiality.

" You are determined to overcome, to overwhelm me," said Allan ; " but I must not leave you to suppose that you have been assisting either a spendthrift, or one who would recklessly make his escape from legal confinement, unless under an excitement that might almost be pronounced a temporary alienation of mind." He then succinctly stated the circumstances under which he had endorsed Mr. Delaval's bill, the alarming letter from Walter, his own escape from the lock-up-house, his mother's convalescence, and his immediate return to Cursitor Street for the purpose of again placing himself in custody.

" I am prouder than ever of my Camillo," cried Isola as he concluded,—an averment which her sparkling eyes fully supported ; " and I envy your mother the possession of such a son."

“ Ah, Isola! if you knew my brother Walter, you would envy her still more, for he is a better and more affectionate son than I am. ”

“ Impossible!—but, as we cannot settle that point, you shall give me some tidings—pleasant ones, I hope—of your lady-love, your *sweetheart* (that is the most charming word in your English language). Of course you did not visit Woodcote without seeing her ?”

“ I do not understand your allusion,—I have no lady-love at Woodcote.”

“ Nay, nay, you cannot disavow it, for Crevetti—not betraying any confidence, I trust—informed me that——”

“ Yes, I recollect now ;—I told him that I left Woodcote partly on account of an attachment, but that——”

“ ‘The course of true love never did run smooth,’—I’ll finish the quotation for you. Well, well! you must live in hopes, recollecting that faint heart never yet won fair lady.”

“ Let me again assure you that Crevetti must have mistaken me.”

“ No, Camillo, I will not be persuaded; your blushes—how I do respect you for retaining that bashful faculty!—your blushes refute your assertion. But the subject pains you,—let us then change it, for the day of your liberation should be all happiness, all pleasant and mutual congratulation.”

At this moment Antonio entered the room holding a letter, while his old sunburnt furrowed features were lighted up with a flare of significant delight, which his mistress instantly perceiving and interpreting, snatched the paper from his hand, and had no sooner glanced at the superscription than she uttered a scream of joy that echoed through the chamber. With blushing face, palpitating bosom, and trembling hands, she tore it open, ran her eager sparkling eyes rapidly over its contents, pressed it repeatedly to her lips and her heart when she had concluded, fell suddenly upon her knees, clasped her uplifted hands together, and, by the devout enthusiastic expression of her face, seemed to be offering a mental thanksgiving to Heaven for the tidings she had just re-

ceived. Again starting to her feet, she abandoned herself to one of those sudden revulsions of feeling which, in any but a person of southern temperament, would appear hardly consistent with her recent genuflexion, and, joyously ejaculating, "It is from Camillo, dear Camillo! he is well—he is happy—he is prosperous!" she seized Allan by the hand, waltzed him vehemently round the room until he was giddy, relaxed her hold, threw herself upon a sofa, and burst into an hysterical passion of mingled tears and laughter.

CHAPTER II.

LEAVING the impressionable Italian, whose changes of mood were not less rapid than extreme, in a state of comparative tranquillity, Allan hastened to visit those pupils whose lessons he had been compelled to forego, and who readily received his apologies when they learnt the cause of his temporary absence. After the fatigues of a long day spent in this occupation, he returned to his lodgings, where, to his no small surprise, he found Harry Freeman, indolently lolling in one chair, his legs supported by another, a cigar in his mouth, and a card in his hand, on the back of which he was sketching a pen-and-ink caricature, with all the spirit and humour of an artist.

"*You* here!" exclaimed Allan: "I thought you were enacting the parts of Hamlet, Sylvester Daggerwood, and half a dozen others, at Elmsley Hall, in Gloucestershire."

"Rehearsing them, you mean. So I have been, my hearty! and last night was to have been our grand flare-up performance: half the country invited—ball and supper afterwards—prime spread—lots of bigwigs and bang-up swells; but it's no go—all off—adjourned *sine die*—can't play without their first fiddle, their *magnus Apollo*—wouldn't do to leave out Hamlet and Daggerwood, and can't have him, seeing as how that 'ere rum mister as was to act 'em is at this here wery minute a-sitting right afore ye."

"What hurried you away at such a moment?"

"A scrawl of black and white from one Allan Latimer, stating that he was grabbed by the bailiffs and locked up in a sponging-house; on receipt of which I sent instantly for a bit of yellow and pair, and rattled off slap-bang to London, leaving the rest of the

company completely horrified at losing their tragedian, comedian, singer, stage-manager, prompter, scene-painter, and factotum, all at one fell swoop."

"I am vexed beyond measure that you should have put yourself and the whole party to such inconvenience on my account."

"What! do you think I would stay there tom-fooling while you were in quod, and partly on my account too? for I find Delaval bamboozled you by mentioning my name. Curse the fellow's impudence! to come the thimblérig over you by saying that *I* would have endorsed his bill! Know the chap too well."

"I certainly acted very foolishly in complying with his request."

"Like a rank spoon—a downright donkey, my dear fellow, that's all; but I've got you out of the scrape famously: been dodging him these two days—know his haunts, though he's a sly old Levanter—pinned him at last, mug to mug, and told him that, if he didn't fork out the flimsies for the bill and costs, I'd show him up all over London

and spoil his sport; whereupon, as ve says when ve drives our wif to Vest Vickham in a vone 'orse shay, he came down with the blunt, like a gentleman, as he isn't."

"You don't mean that he paid the bill?"

"Every farthing; and I handed over the tin to the Signora an hour or two ago, so that you now owe her nothing but gratitude for her generous interference. What a trump-card, what a regular right-hearted good 'un that woman is!"

"How shall I ever thank you for all your kindness?"

"Come, come, tip us no blarney! As I was the means of getting you into limbo, what the deuce could I do less than get you out again? Lucky that I knew how to run Delaval to earth."

"And what *is* this specious fellow who talks so boastingly of his great acquaintance? The sheriff's officer termed him a flat-catcher."

"No bad name for him. Delaval is half a gentleman, half a loose fish about town—in short, a gambler, who makes a flare-up or

fights shy, according to his success or failure at the roulette-table, which is his favourite game. When he is cleaned out and has no tin, he flies kites—draw bills—gets flats and spoons (present company always excepted, you know) to endorse them—takes them to the Jews, or such worthies as your friend Mr. Smales, who advance money upon them—returns to the table—and, when he makes a lucky hit, takes up one bill and draws another. He is of good family, and has moved among bigwigs of whom he still loves to talk ; but he'll probably end as a flash-man, or by driving a Bath or Brighton rumble-tumble,—and that 'ere's all vot I knows on him."

“And more than enough to prevent my wishing to know any more of him.”

“*In* course ! you must shelve him—tip him the cold shoulder. But, Allan, my fine fellow, this bush-fighting and a London life doesn't seem to suit you : you look pale ; and if you'll take the advice of such a particularly sage Mentor as Harry Freeman, you'll consult some equally sage Esculapian

(if you can find him) touching the state of your body politic; and so good bye, and take care of yourself—I'm back in another hour to Elmsley Hall, for the whole neighbourhood will go into asterisks if they don't soon recover their Hamlet and Sylvester Daggerwood. But harkye, my dear fellow! if you get into any further troubles, or want any assistance that I can supply, tip me a line, and *in* course, wherever I may be playing Punch, I'll pitch Judy to the devil, and whip up to Lonnon afore ever you can say Jack Robinson." With a most cordial shake of both hands, while his open handsome countenance was lighted up with a friendly smile that attested the depth and sincerity of his feelings, whatever might be the levity of his manner, Harry, without waiting for any acknowledgments, quitted the room, carelessly, and yet charmingly singing an opera air as he sauntered downstairs. While he seemed to notice nothing and to care for nothing, he had a quick eye and a feeling heart, and he was quite right as to the state of Allan's health, which

had been so much disordered by the atmosphere of the metropolis, coupled with his recent fatigues and excitement, that he himself felt the want of a little change, though he hardly knew how to accomplish it consistently with his avocations, which would only allow a short absence from London. At the suggestion of Isola, who had also noticed his pallid looks, he put himself on board the Saturday's steamer for Gravesend, intending to return early on the following Tuesday,—a trip which would give him as much change of air as could well be accomplished in so short a time. Evening was approaching when he arrived at Gravesend; he wished to escape from the people who had crowded the boat, and were now thronging to the different inns; and, quitting the town, he walked on to the village of Higham, for the purpose of visiting Gad's Hill, of which such pleasant mention is made in Shakspeare's play of 'Henry the Fourth.'

Tempted by the warmth and fineness of the night, he wandered over this vicinity for some time, when, finding that the hour

was getting late, and that he was too much fatigued to return to Gravesend, he betook himself to the hostelry of the place, an ancient building, occupying, as it was said, the site of a nunnery founded by King Stephen, and inquired whether he could sleep there. "Ay, that you may," replied the hostess, "and in the best room too; and you may be sure your bed 'll be well aired, for the Quaker gentleman who slept in it last night prefers a small room at the back of the house, which does seem rayther queer, only there's no accounting for tastes, you know, Sir, and them Quakers is such an odd set."

Assenting to this proposition, Allan partook of such supper as they placed before him, and immediately retired to his bed, which stood in the dark arched recess of a large old-fashioned room. Just as he was sinking into sleep he heard some one open the door,—for he had never thought of fastening it,—and a man walked into the chamber, perfectly unconscious, as it would seem by his motions, that it contained any

other occupant, for he deposited the candle which he held, upon a table, and proceeding to a chest of drawers, opened one, whence he drew out a brace of pocket-pistols. Somewhat alarmed at this proceeding, Allan remained perfectly motionless, with his eyes fixed upon the intruder, who was attired like a Quaker, but whose features he could not distinguish, from the position in which he stood. In another minute, however, the figure returned to the table, sat down beside it, and examined the pans and priming of his weapons, in such a posture that the light flared full upon his face, when Allan, shuddering with horror and amazement, felt his blood run cold within him, for he distinctly beheld the features of Captain Harcourt! Yes, spite of the Quaker disguise—yes, spite of the dead body seen in the uninhabited house—*there* sat before him, living, and apparently in perfect health, the very man whose corpse, unless his senses had strangely deceived him, he had so lately seen and touched.

Few persons could be less subject to

superstitious terrors; yet such had been his momentary appalment at sight of what he might well deem a spectral apparition, that it was an incalculable relief to feel convinced he was gazing upon a living fellow-creature, though he saw that he was armed, and had every reason to believe him a nefarious and dangerous character. All ground of apprehension, however, was presently dispelled, for the stranger secured in his bosom the pistols, which he had apparently forgotten when he had changed his room, took up the candle, quitted the chamber, and was heard walking up the stairs, as if returning to his own apartment.

To prevent the reappearance of so unwelcome a visitant, whatever might be his nature, Allan arose, locked the door, and, returning to his bed, remained for a long time lost in vain conjectures as to the incomprehensible spectacle by which his faculties had been bewildered. That the fashionable, or, to speak more accurately, the flashy-looking Captain Harcourt (even supposing him not to have been drowned), should be meta-

morphosed into a Quaker, seemed as unlikely as that he should be a solitary wanderer in that sequestered spot; but on the other hand, it was equally inconsistent that one of "the Society of Friends," and consequently a man of peace, should have provided himself with fire-arms. Even when he fell asleep, after a long balancing of probabilities and possibilities, his dreams, influenced doubtless by the vision he had seen, conjured up such a wild phantasmagoria of images, that, on awaking soon after daylight, he was inclined to believe the whole impression was neither more nor less than the result of a nightmare.

Unable to sleep, he dressed himself and again rambled into the country, directing his footsteps towards the banks of the river. An hour or two had been passed in wandering through fields interspersed with copses and plantations, when he reached a patch of rough grass and underwood shelving down to the river, and crowned with an old oak-tree, still bushy and umbrageous in its lower boughs, although its topmost branches

were bare and cankered. The locality reminded him of one of his favourite school-boy haunts, in sympathy with which reminiscence, or perhaps to escape from the heat of a sultry morning, he accepted the invitation of a gnarled trunk covered with stumps, climbed up it, and embowered himself in the shade of the clustering leaves, where he found amusement some time in watching the sails of the many vessels passing up and down the river.

He had always been an admirer of the country, but he was now an admirer of Isola also; and, to a lover's eye, the charms of nature are enhanced by recalling the beauty of her who reigns paramount in his thoughts. Never had he been so much enchanted with a prospect as while he thus sat amid the boughs, gazing upon the landscape and thinking of Isola. Earth, with its buds and springing corn, whispered pleasant prophecies of flowers, and perfume, and of many a song-resounding harvest-home,—all of which mentally enwreathed themselves into a delightful repast in some visionary

floral bower, gladdened by the presence and the melodious voice of Isola. The homeward-bound vessels, and the merry meetings that awaited their happy crews, suggested his own glad return to the society of Isola. Nature, pushing up through the soil her myriad gift-laden hands, conjured up the thought of what he would gladly do for Isola, had he the power. In the music of the winds, the waves, the birds, he heard the voice of Isola, and the echo, from his own heart, breathed back the same welcome sound. Let it not be imagined that there was any profanation in the devotional feeling with which his bosom glowed, even while thus yearning towards a human object, for there is the sympathy of gratitude between earthly and celestial love, when the former is pure and our budding hopes have yet received no blight.

After having indulged for some time in such thoughts and sensations, Allan, turning his eyes in a new direction, started as he saw the last night's Quaker, whom he had been reasoning into the unsubstantial crea-

tion of a nightmare, walking towards the tree with most unquestionable appearances of flesh-and-blood reality, for he paused for a moment, took a deliberate survey of the river with a small telescope, and again advanced, making the branches crackle as he dashed through an opposing clump of bushes. He drew nearer, he stood in the shade of the tree, he took off his broad-brimmed hat and wiped his perspiring forehead, after which he removed his coloured neckcloth and substituted a white one, for the apparent completion of his Quaker costume, during which operation his observer in the tree, who watched all his proceedings with an intense interest, distinctly noticed the well-known scar, extending from the chin to the throat, which attested his identity with Harcourt. As if to remove all doubt upon this subject, the stranger exclaimed, looking at his watch, "It is five minutes beyond the time, and I see no boat. Curse the fellow! where can he have got to?"—words which, though few, convinced their hearer that they could be uttered by none

but the Captain, so peculiar was the tone of his almost feminine voice.

In a few minutes a boat was seen emerging from beneath a bank tufted with bushes ; the Quaker figure held up his hat as a signal, hurried down to the edge of the water, and jumped with alacrity into the boat, which was rowed rapidly back in the direction whence it came, and again disappeared, hidden by the sudden rising of the land.

“From his being armed and disguised,” thought Allan, “this fellow has been manifestly guilty of some illegal act, and I am by no means sure that I ought to suffer him to escape from the hands of justice, which, by his haunting this sequestered neighbourhood, and stealing thus covertly from the shore, is evidently his present object. What right, however, have I to detain him? Of what can I accuse him, unless of a gross inconsistency with himself in not being dead? If my senses have not utterly deceived me,—if, in fact, I possess my senses and am a living man,—that figure was Captain Harcourt, and *he* ought to be a corpse—a trim reckoning

which refutes itself by a *reductio ad absurdum* ! Altogether it is a mystery so inscrutable, that I verily believe, were I to puzzle my brain in its solution, the attempt would drive me mad, unless, as I am half inclined to suspect, I am mad already. Seeing, as I have lately experienced, is not always good ground for believing ; but I may as well watch this skulking runaway as long as I am able, for I may perchance be enabled at some future day not only to solve the enigma connected with him, but to bring him to the punishment which I am sure he merits." So saying, he descended from the tree, and, hastening to a spot that overhung the river, perceived the boat pulling across the stream towards Tilbury Fort, where it was finally lost to his straining eyes amid the vessels lying off the opposite shore, and the hazy vapours engendered by the heat of the day. Perplexing himself with endless conjectures, in spite of his resolutions to the contrary, Allan returned at the expiration of his short holiday to London, benefited in health by his little excursion, but completely

mystified in mind by the inexplicable scenes of which he had been a witness.

“Delighted am I to see you with a less pallid cheek,” cried Isola when he called upon her; “and as these fresh-water voyages evidently agree with you, I hope you will repeat them. You come most *à propos*. I have made an engagement for you to-night. You know something, I believe, of Sir Gregory Cavendish, who lives in the neighbourhood of Woodcote, and who occupies the mansion in Belgrave Square, which his friends have entitled, from the gorgeousness of its furniture, ‘Gilt Gingerbread House.’ Well, he gives a vocal and instrumental concert to-night, to which he has invited half the aristocracy of London.”

“Surely they will not visit such a purse-proud vulgarian as Sir Gregory, whose wealth is known to have been acquired by very disreputable means?”

“No wonder you think so, Camillo, for your pure heart makes you simple-minded; but you are mistaken, and, foreigner as I am, I can enlighten your ignorance. When

a rich *parvenu* from the City or elsewhere wishes to force himself into fashionable society, and finds that he cannot succeed, even by giving fine dinners in a fine house of some fine square, he avails himself of the rage for music, engages Opera-singers and first-rate instrumentalists, secures perhaps a new lion or lioness from the Continent, announces a grand concert, makes it worth the while of some needy dowager or titled chaperone to fill his rooms, gives her whole packs of blank invitation-cards for the purpose, willingly consenting to her insulting stipulation that his own personal friends must not expect to be asked, and has the pleasure of reading in the papers a long list of the nobility and the *élite* of the fashionable world who honoured him by their company.

“But why should they go, even when the invitation comes filtered through the hands of one of their own order?”

“In the first place, they lay the flattering unction to their souls that they go to hear the concert, not to visit the giver; and, in

the second place, I should like to know where people will *not* go, when they can be admitted gratis to an exhibition of any sort. Yes, believe me, Camillo, you have been termed the *nation boutiquière* more truly than you care to admit, for even your highest ranks will sometimes betray a huckstering spirit, and are seldom better pleased than when they feel that they are driving a good bargain, by obtaining something worth having—for nothing.”

“They may certainly plead the something worth having when they can listen to you.”

“Look again at your fancy fairs and charity bazaars. Urgent as may be the necessity, dire the distress, unquestionable the claims of the objects for whom you plead, your appeals, simply resting upon the duty of benevolence, will only extort half-crowns and half-sovereigns, even from the habitually bountiful, of whom there is no lack in this country; but hold out to them something that resembles a bargain, tender them a *quid pro quo*, even though it be trash, rubbish, trumpery,—and the charity-

mart shall be thronged with eager higglers, while the money shall be profusely showered down in fifties and hundreds of pounds, to whatever purpose it may be applied."

"It has indeed very much the appearance of selling charity, and making benevolence a question of barter and exchange. But to return to Sir Gregory—how came I to be invited to perform at his concert?"

"You saw Mr. Rosenhagen at my party the other night?"

"Which was he?"

"A shortish, stout, dark, rather consequential man, with a young wig and old whiskers, a gaudy waistcoat, a ponderous gold chain, and so fine a brilliant on his little finger, that he is obliged to be always taking snuff in order to display it."

"I think I recollect such a person: what is he?"

"A sort of *gran Maestro di Cappella* to the fashionable band of musical amateurs, as well as to the unfashionables, who, in order to be in the vogue, set up for *fanatici per la musica*. Both classes contain many

pretenders glad to veil their own ignorance of the art by consulting a sort of broker, better informed than themselves; and Rosenhagen is the man whom they universally employ to supply and superintend their concerts, although, *entre nous*, I look upon him as little better than a smatterer. He knows, however, how to manage the English—calls himself a German, though he was born in London—talks loud in order to create a sensation—affects a certain air of swaggering *haut ton*—makes it a great favour to render his services—engages the performers on his own terms—charges a round sum to the wealthy concert-giver—and takes very good care not to lose anything by the bargain. Then, again, when he is in a condescending humour, he is prevailed upon to select a piano or harp, to the great delight of simple mammas and daughters, who pay him with empty praise, but not to the exclusion of his solid pudding, which he digests in the shape of a twenty or forty pound *douceur* from the vender of the instrument.”

“But could he succeed to this extent unless he were a man of real abilities?”

“Yes: real talent retires; pretension puts itself forward in order to astonish fools, and is sure of a large audience.”

“He must find this a thriving trade.”

“Judge for yourself. Poor and obscure a few years ago, he has now superb apartments in the Albany, gives costly dinners, drives a handsome Brougham, belongs to an expensive club, plays high, and is seen everywhere;—and thus have I given you in a few words the history of Mr. Rosenhagen.”

“But you have still omitted to state how he came to bespeak my services.”

“Thinking you might as well pocket a few guineas to defray the expenses of your trip, I refused to sing unless you were engaged.”

“How very considerate of you! but I don't quite like the thought of being forced upon him.”

“You are ever proud, Camillo, but you go as my friend: there is nothing humiliating in that, I hope. Now listen. I have told

you how Sir Gregory and his family are trying to force themselves into the circles of upper life, but I have not explained to you why this particular concert is given. Know, then, that Algernon Cavendish, pretending to be desperately smitten with my charms, has been paying me all sorts of fulsome compliments, assumes to be my *cavalière servente* wherever I go, and has actually presumed to profane my ears with the word love!—Love! The blaspheming wretch!” exclaimed Isola, her eyes flashing, her face reddening, and her whole frame becoming dilated with anger; “how dare he desecrate that high and holy word by applying it to me, whom he only seeks to degrade by his unhallowed passion?”

“The audacious puppy! And you are going, nevertheless, to his house!”

“Yes, Camillo, for the sum I shall receive will be a step towards Italy. He affects to patronise me—I am too covetous to quarrel with him, every way despicable as he is; and as to his impertinent advances, I only treat them with contemptuous laughter,

as an idle flirtation unworthy any other or more serious notice."

"You must have great forbearance."

"Not so much as you imagine. Let me once more assure you that as I shall ever maintain my self-respect, I will not deserve to lose the respect of others. For my own purposes, I may make fools of the vicious, but never will I forfeit the good opinion of the virtuous."

To the great surprise of Allan, the magnificent rooms of Sir Gregory were crowded with high-sounding titles, diamonds glittered and plumes waved in all directions; it was truly a brilliant assemblage. As usual, the instrumental music, fine as it was, only afforded a convenient cover for the conversation, which had previously languished, but now threatened to drown the tones of the performers. Even the appearance of Isola, the great attraction of the night, did not completely silence that large portion of English auditors who prefer the sound of their own voice to every other upon earth; and when she again came forward to sing the aria of

Di tanti palpiti from the Tancredi, the interruptions and noises became so intolerable that she stopped short, soon after she had begun, while, with an arch smile, and in a voice of the most winning suavity, she thus addressed the company—"Ladies and Gentlemen! I came here entirely for your gratification, and I am sure, therefore, that you must be pleased at my leaving off in the middle of the aria; for unless I had done so, it would have been quite impossible for the other performances to go on. There are several ladies and gentlemen so busily engaged in conversation, and evidently upon such important subjects, that I really think you are bound to listen to them, and I must also entreat a patient hearing for this incessant flirting of fans, and the loud rattling of spoons upon the ice plates—harmonious accompaniments, which my singing, I fear, would only tend to interrupt."

The words "saucy!—insolent!—impertinent!" were muttered in several quarters; but the cries of "Brava! Brava!" uttered the most vociferously by those who had pre-

viciously been the most noisy, drowned every other. Miss Cavendish, apologising for the rudeness of her visitants, entreated the offended songstress to resume.—Isola again came forward, amid the profound silence of the whole assemblage, and sang so exquisitely that she was greeted with a rapturous *encore*, a call with which she readily and courteously complied, contriving to exceed even herself in the repetition of the air.

“I told you,” said Isola, when talking over the occurrence on the following morning with Allan—“that I was by no means so forbearing as you imagined, but I should not have ventured on so decided a step unless I had been more than usually annoyed by the interruptions of which I complained. Besides, I really wished to give a lesson to the offending parties, a rebuke which I find too much needed in most of the London music meetings, for I cannot tamely submit to a rudeness from the highest English society, to which I have never been exposed in the very humblest assemblages of the Continent.”

"I admire your spirit, but I was afraid at first that it might have been taken in dudgeon."

"No; depend upon it, the only way to treat these offenders against the courtesies of society, is to bully them. Show that you don't care for them, and they will care for you; and the higher their class the more easily can you thus control them. Did I not tell you how Rosenhagen succeeded by affecting hauteur, and making it a great favour to ease people of their money? *Apropos* to the mention of that worthy, did you notice last night a tall thin elderly man in spectacles, who condescended to address me for some time, though he still held the Duke of Keswick by the button?"

"A loud-talking person with free and easy manners?"

"The same. Well, that is Monsieur or Mister Preville, a complete *pendant* in the world of pictures to Rosenhagen in the sphere of music. When a *nouveau riche* or an old *millionaire* wishes to form a Gallery, or to cover the walls of his dining-room with

chefs-d'œuvres of the old masters (moderns are exploded, *their* works would not admit of thimble-rig substitutions, so he professes to hold them all in utter contempt), there is but one man in London to whom they can betake themselves, and that man is Preville, whose fiat, as to the authenticity of a *Rafaele*, a *Claude*, a *Rubens*, or a *Paul Veronese*, is absolute and decisive. One of your burlettas says:—

‘Jove in his chair, of the sky Lord Mayor.

When he nods men and Gods

Keeps in awe——’

Well, this Jupiter of the connoisseurs, this pictorial Pope, is equally despotic and infallible, and when he pronounces a decree it would be deemed little less than sacrilege to doubt it.”

“And, like other Popes and Jupiters, I suppose he expects offerings to be laid upon his altar.”

“Only accepting them, however, as a prodigious favour! Making yearly excursions to the Continent, he picks up good copies of the old masters; contrives to discover the

half-obliterated name of the true painter in some dark corner ; or, without employing any artifice whatever, pronounces it at once a valuable original ; and after much solicitation and competition, is prevailed upon to sell it for as many thousands as it cost him hundreds."

" A thriving trade."

" Ay, and thrivingly attested by a handsome house in May Fair, crammed with valuable originals of course,—a handsome equipage, and admission to the tables of all the rich and titled collectors in London, by whom the free and easy manners which you noticed, are attributed to the natural confidence of an enlightened and unmistakeable judgment."

" And who was the little red-nosed doctor to whom you introduced me after my solo ?"

" That was Dr. Crispen, better known by his nickname of Doctor Caoutchouc, the celebrated rubber, who cures all human complaints by manipulation, assisted by some panacean embrocation of his own discovery—and who may be now termed the fashionable quack *par excellence*, although it is

said that he was an obscure shoemaker only a few years ago, and that it would be difficult to find the register of his diploma. Luxurious London, with its million and a half of inhabitants, will always contain a certain number of real or imaginary invalids, who, having vainly exhausted the art of the regular practitioner, snatch at empirics and charlatans, as drowning men at straws. Prince Hohenlohe has ceased to work miraculous cures—people no longer read with their stomachs, see with their backs, and are thrown into ecstatic fits, or death-like sleeps, under the metallic tractor of the magnetist. St. John Long's counter-irritation nostrum sleeps in the grave of its inventor—Homœopathy is itself becoming infinitesimal—and up starts Dr. Crispen to cure all the ills that flesh is heir to by friction and embrocations; a remedy which, after all, is but a plagiarism from Mahomed's shampooing."

"Is it not strange that ignorant pretenders should be able to enrich themselves by such palpable absurdities?"

"Not at all, if you consider the great

wealth of London, recollecting also that their presumptuous promises of cure operate upon the two strongest of our passions—hope and fear; and that of all fools, a rich sick fool is the most easily gullible.”

“Which may explain why our nation affords the best harvest for such impostors.”

“It would seem as if you required mountebanks for the soul as well as the body, if we may judge by the success of Johanna Southcote, and the more recent delusion of Irvine and his unknown tongues. These have had their day, and I really know not what the good people of England would have done for spiritual excitement, had not the Oxford Tracts sprung up at the very moment when a new nostrum was most wanted. La Fayette’s cure for all the political ills of France was republicanism with a king. Your Oxford doctors, cutting off the head and crown which he added, prescribe as a remedy for all the spiritual complaints of England—popery without a pope.”

“How have you managed during your

short residence in London to obtain such an insight into its leading characters?"

"They obtrude themselves upon my attention, to the exclusion, probably, of parties much better worth knowing. I am naturally inquisitive, and Harry Freeman, who is acquainted with everybody and everything, has, in his rattling yet clever and intelligent way, completely placed me *au courant du jour* as to the notabilities. He calls Rosenhagen, Preville, and Dr. Crispen, the three grand humbugs of London."

"It might be well if some of their dupes and victims could see the portraits you have drawn of those worthies."

"It would not disabuse them. There are other brainless fanatics besides the worshippers of Juggernaut, who prefer an ugly deity, and who even think it a merit to be maimed or killed, provided they can contribute to the support of his carriage. And now, Camillo, since I am in an admonitory and didactic vein—a rare occurrence—I must condemn another custom in your upper classes, which, to give you

a perfectly new quotation, would be 'more honoured in the breach than the observance.' I allude to a practice which I would call superannuated flirtation, effete coquetry, greybeard gallantry, amusing itself in its second childhood by conjuring up the ghost of its departed profligacy : a pastime which, if it means nothing, is ridiculous ; and if it means anything, is abandoned as well as contemptible. In dining at Sir Gregory's I remarked, as I have done elsewhere, that there was a pointed and significant care to place Lord Crutchly next to Lady Totterton, Sir Adam Winterly next to Lady Sarah Oldham, and Mr. Ogle by the side of Mrs. Wrinklesworth, an arrangement to the necessity of which a bantering allusion was frequently made by the rest of the company ; while the parties themselves, most of whom were sexagenarians at least, received their innuendoes with a smirk of affected consciousness, as if they were so many young couples engaged in courtship."

"Sweethearts with one leg in the grave ! Probably their friends only encourage them for their own amusement."

“If most of them, as I believe, have their hearts in the grave as well as one leg, how shall we account for this posthumous billing and cooing? Hamlet says to his mother, ‘Assume a virtue, if you have it not;’ but these grandmothers and grandfathers prefer the assumption of a vice which they have not, and are hypocrites on the side of evil. Making a merit of having deserted their sins, when their sins had deserted them, people in former days, after they had passed their grand climacteric, used to illustrate the dictum, that a youth of folly’s an old age of cards; or, turning saints when they could no longer be sinners, would devoutly give to God the devil’s leavings: but the offenders to whom I allude, after having worn out their bodies, seem to find a corrupt pleasure in becoming speculative, when they cease to be practical libertines.”

“If they can find a forlorn pleasure in thus looking back, no wonder that they are afraid to look forwards.”

“Ay, and if these were friendships instead of flirtations, if the parties were attracted towards each other by intellectual sympathy,

by fellowship of age, or by a congeniality—but hist ! here comes the visitant I expected—I know his conceited rap, for he cannot even knock at a door unaffectedly : for once he is punctual to his hour. Step into the next room : he calls upon me by appointment, but I will not suffer him to detain me long.” Allan withdrew into the inner apartment, the door of which, receding from the lock, after he had imagined it closed, compelled him to become an unintentional auditor of what passed between Isola and her visitant, whose drawling fantastical voice immediately proclaimed him to be Algernon Cavendish. At first he had thought of softly closing the intervening door, but having now determined, for the heart is a quicker casuist than the head, that such a proceeding might draw attention and, perhaps, excite suspicion, he resolved to sit quiet and leave matters as they were.

The recollection that Sir Gregory’s dandy son had professed an unbounded admiration of the fair Italian, not only quickened his pulsation, but his ears ; and although he

scorned in general the character of a listener, he could not refrain from paying an eager attention to the discourse within. After many hyperbolical compliments upon her singing on the previous night, and as much fulsome flattery upon her personal appearance, the visitant expressed his fear that the remuneration made to her by Mr. Rosenhagen would prove inadequate to her just claims, and requested her acceptance of a pocket-book, with which he had taken the liberty of providing himself. "As I came to England," was the reply, "for the purpose of selling my vocal powers, such as they are, I willingly receive whatever they may bring me. You have my thanks, Sir, which is all I have to offer."

Her companion next inquired whether she did not contemplate an immediate excursion to Canterbury, that she might sing for some public charity; and having received an answer in the affirmative, he launched out into fresh encomiums upon her surpassing beauty and transcendent talents, professed himself completely captivated by

her varied charms, and wound up his effusion by saying that if she would allow him the supreme happiness of accompanying her in her excursion, an arrangement which might be made without exciting the least scandal, he would willingly place at her disposal ten times the contents of the pocket-book she had just done him the honour to accept.

At this audacious proposal Allan, reddening with rage, could hardly restrain his indignation ; but he compelled himself to remain quiet, eagerly awaiting the burst of fury, or the withering scorn, with which Isola would overwhelm her insulter. What was his astounding bewilderment when, after a pause of breathless suspense, he heard her exclaim in a tone of gaiety, " Well ! it is not a bad idea, I protest, considering that it is yours. As I shall travel by night, I shall want a guard, and if you positively insist upon being my companion, I don't know how I am to prevent you. My time is precious,—I shall have a carriage at the door at eleven o'clock to-morrow night, and

you may call at ten minutes before that hour. There, there, no protestations,—no ecstasies—the affair is settled ; and you must leave me now, that I may make arrangements for my departure.” Surprised and rejoiced until he even forgot his habitual drawling, the dandy protested that he had been made the happiest man in existence ; declared that her favours would ever command his unbounded gratitude ; hoped that their alliance would be continued so long as she remained in England ; promised to be punctual to the appointment, and finally took his departure. Allan, in the meanwhile, stupified by what he had just heard, still retained his seat, with his hands clasped and his eyes fixed on the carpet, when Isola entered, sharply exclaiming, “ How is this ? —Has the door been left ajar ? Then you have overheard everything that passed. Are you not ashamed of yourself thus to pry into my secrets ? ” Allan would have explained the circumstances that had rendered him an unintentional auditor, but such was his confusion of mind, that he

hesitated, stammered, and was again beginning, when the changeful Italian burst into such a fit of uncontrollable laughter, that she was obliged to throw herself into a chair until it had somewhat subsided; after which she continued, "I see it all—I understand it all—your reddened face, and stern expression, and transfixed attitude have revealed to me the whole truth:—you are horrified, dumbfounded at what you have heard."

"That I am bewildered—that I can hardly trust the evidence of my ears, I must really confess."

"Trust then to me, and distrust your senses, if you do not mean to give me serious cause of displeasure. *You* offended with *me*! Our feelings ought to be reversed; but I will not punish you as you deserve. You have heard my appointment with Mr. Cavendish—it is for to-morrow night—I will now make an appointment with *you*,—come to me at the same hour. I will invite a dozen more—it was a sudden thought, but I think it will amuse us all. *En*

attendant, I must wish you good morning ; for, as I told Mr. Cavendish, I must make arrangements for my journey : and so, most worthy knight of the rueful visage, *addio !*" With these words she waltzed out of the room, and was heard alternately singing and laughing as she mounted the stairs.

CHAPTER III.

ALTHOUGH the bodily health of the poor lunatic at the Manor-House was now completely re-established, while the quiet regular life she led, combined with the kind and tender treatment she experienced, had restored the tone of her mind to an almost uniform composure ; she had made no discernible progress towards the recovery of her reason. It has been mentioned that she was supplied with a guitar, upon which she would occasionally play snatches of tunes and sing fragments of songs, sometimes disconnected and unmeaning, yet always seeming to produce a soothing influence upon her feelings. At the suggestion of Mrs. Latimer, who had more than once observed her moving her fingers, as if striking the

keys of an instrument, the kind-hearted Mr. Brown ordered a piano to be placed in her sitting-room, at which she immediately seated herself, without betraying the least emotion at its unexpected appearance, ran over the keys with the rapid touch of a proficient, and began to warble an Italian air of exquisite tenderness, suddenly breaking into a different strain, which must have awakened some affecting reminiscence, for she ceased and sank into a deep reverie, while the tears fell slowly upon the clasped white hands that rested on her knee. But these transitions would occasionally assume a more cheerful character.—

“With wildest pathos would she pour awhile
Some plaintive ballad ; then, with vacant smile,
Break into merriment, and carol free
Some childish chant with more than childish glee.”

Judging, from her skill in one accomplishment, that she must have been instructed in others, the gentle and considerate Walter, who had taken the deepest interest in her welfare, deposited in her apartment his own drawing and painting materials, observing, with no

small gratification, that she derived a manifest pleasure from the new amusement thus supplied to her. Alas ! if it afforded fresh evidences of her skill, it gave also new proofs of her continued derangement, for she would devote a whole morning to the elaborate painting of a flower or landscape ;—

“ Then with fantastic scrawl o’erdaub the whole,
Enjoy the freak, and laugh without control ;
That laugh appalling, where the features flare
With joy in which the reason owns no share.”

The recreation, however, which seemed to exercise the most beneficial influence upon her feelings was a stroll in the fields with Fanny Chubbs, whose unremitting attentions and amiable disposition had conciliated her entire regard. Upon these occasions the rustics of the neighbourhood, whose compassion was not unmingled with a degree of superstitious awe, arising from her dementated state, and the mystery attached to her, would cease their labours, while they imparted to each other, in deep and earnest whispers, their several theories as to her secret history and the cause of her malady.

Even the children, as she approached, discontinued their games, hushed their cries, drew reverently aside, put their forefingers in their mouths, and only stole a furtive glance at her as she passed, gazing intently at her, but in an awe-struck silence, until she was out of sight or hearing, when their evanescent pity was succeeded by a joyous renewal of their pastimes.

Upon Fanny herself her total change of life had been attended with the most salutary effects, both as to health and spirits. Not only had she escaped from a home rendered daily more uncomfortable by her father's increasing intemperance, but the constant sight of a female and a lady still more unhappy than herself had tended to withdraw her thoughts from brooding over her own griefs, and had reconciled her in some degree to her lot—circumstances which might well explain her improved appearance, though Mrs. Glossop attributed it exclusively to the renovating posset which she very kindly concocted and administered with her own Esculapian hands. Many as were the pretty

walks in the neighbourhood, it did so happen that Fanny gave a decided preference to one leading to a gentle eminence, whence she could obtain a view of old Groombridge's mill. Here would she sit, though it was rather a sunny and exposed spot, riveting her eyes to the whirling vans, wondering where Harry was, and how he was occupied at that very moment, from which vain conjectures her thoughts would revert to the pleasant hours she had passed in working the two hearts and the true lovers' knots on the shoulders of his smock-frock.

An occurrence took place at this juncture which for a short time disturbed the equanimity of "the poor mad lady." A family newly settled in the neighbourhood having called at the Manor-House, Brown, first relating to them the adventure of farmer Chubbs and the mysterious monk, produced the watch which had been found in the cart, leaving it on the table after their departure. He had not long returned to the sitting-room when his fair inmate entered, and walked round the apartment, plucking the

forefinger of one hand with the finger and thumb of the other, a habit she had acquired while she whispered inarticulately to herself. As she was thus occupied, her eye fell upon the watch, when she uttered a loud cry, ran eagerly forward to the table, snatched it up, touched a secret spring which had hitherto remained undetected, imprinted the most eager kisses upon a miniature revealed within the case, and then pressed it to her bosom with an impassioned fondness which terminated in a burst of tears.

“Poor thing! poor thing! what’s the matter now?” cried the merchant, as, hastening to the table and looking over her shoulder, he beheld in the miniature an exquisitely finished portrait of a clergyman in his robes. “Shouldn’t wonder if it was her husband—must be—very wrong, if it isn’t, to kiss a person in that way. Wonder whether he’s alive—there she goes again pressing him to her heart. Odsbobs! a lucky dog that fellow in his canonicals. The sight of him seems quite to have overcome her—she looks as if she would fall

from her chair ;—here, Fanny, run for the pommade divine—I mean the Rowland's Kalydor ;—what the deuce is it that you give to women when they're fainting away ?”

“ Oh dear, dear !” exclaimed Fanny, “ it seems to be worse than that ; I fear she is going into violent hysterics. What *shall* I do ?”

“ Why, prevent them, to be sure, silly girl ! and not stand staring at her like a stuck pig. What did I hire you for ? Why don't you open the window, shut the door, stir the fire, run for a fan, rub her hands ?”

“ But if she should go into raging hysterics, I shall be frightened out of my seven senses—I am sure I shall.”

“ Zooks !” exclaimed the merchant, getting red in the face, in the anticipation of some delirious burst, “ I never saw a woman in violent hysterics—what do they do ?—kick—bite—scratch—jump over your head like a mad cat—throw you out of window—split your skull with the poker ? Oh, here comes Trotman—that's lucky—he's never at a loss.—Hallo, you scoundrel ! what are you

running away for, the moment you enter the room? Gone! Was there ever such a pitiful, cowardly, sneaking, useless fellow!"

"La, Sir! he's not used to ladies, and faintings, and fits."

"Then he's not fit for my service, and I'll give him warning this very——" The completion of the sentence was prevented by the hasty return of Trotman with a tumbler of water, into which he poured some sal-volatile from a phial, and held it to the lips of the patient, who gulped down a portion of the mixture, by which she appeared to be considerably revived, for after two or three sobs she drew herself up in the chair, and acknowledged the timely succour she had received by a gentle inclination of the head.

"Was that what you ran for, John?" asked Brown; to which receiving a silent nod in reply, he continued;—"Then *I* was a scoundrel (and a jackass besides) for calling *you* one, that's all." John made a very respectful acquiescent bow, and ejaculated the single word, "Glossop."

“Ay, ay, there’s a good fellow! do send Mrs. Glossop immediately.” Trotman was again out of the room almost before the words were out of his master’s mouth, and in a few minutes the housekeeper bustled into the apartment, adjusting her disordered head-dress as she exclaimed, “Never had such a stunning blow! John running, calling me, one way, and I running the other; when just as I turned the corner by the pantry, our two heads came smack together, *dos à dos*, as the French say, and I really thought at first that I was *dégagé* for life. *Mon Doo!* what’s the matter with the lady? *Pauvre garson!* how ill she looks! What has happened to her?”

“Poor thing! she has been overcome by kissing a parson, that’s all.”

“La, Sir, how can you talk so? I’m sure she’s too innocent a creature to be guilty of such a downright *mauvaise honte*.”

“Master means the picture,” said Fanny, pointing to the miniature, and anxious to exculpate her patient.”

“Oh, if it’s only a painted one, I don’t see

any great harm in it ; that's quite a different *tout autre chose*—but *ma foi* ! it's in the case of the monk's watch, I do declare—only to think ! and we can't find out the *je ne sai quoi* of it—well, that makes the whole affair a more puzzling *eclaircissmong* than it was before, and we shall never—but see, Fanny ! she points to the door ; she wants to *allez vous ong* to her own apartment—take her other arm, and I'll support on this side. There ! there ! *mon cher petit maitre*—lean upon me, you'll soon be better, you'll soon be in a rabid state again.”

Although repeatedly solicited by questions and signs as to the original of the miniature, the silence of the lunatic remained unbroken except by a few incoherent phrases ; but she exhibited such a marked disinclination to part with it, that she was allowed to retain the watch, and she would sit for hours gazing intently upon it, and mumbling to herself as if conjuring up reminiscences of past days. Quiet and absorbed as she seemed to be at first while indulging these reveries, they must have awakened some

irritating association, for she now occasionally relapsed into moods of ungovernable excitement, during the prevalence of which they were obliged to place her under restraint, while the whole household were kept in perpetual alarm from the uncertainty as to these recurring accesses of delirium, and the mischief to which they might lead.

Under these circumstances the merchant, yielding to the advice of his friends and neighbours, and actuated more by a desire to promote her recovery than to get rid of his inmate, however distressing might be her domiciliation in the Manor-House, placed her under the care of a physician at a distance of twenty miles, who received three or four insane patients, and had acquired a merited renown for his success in curing them. His terms were very high, but to these Brown made not the slightest objection, generously declaring that he should adopt the poor lady who had been thus accidentally thrown upon his protection, and maintain her as long as she lived, should they not succeed in discovering her friends. Not

without much regret did he part from her, for her beauty, her misfortune, her lady-like appearance, and winning suavity of manner, when not under morbid excitement, had won his attachment as deeply as her affliction had excited his commiseration. He declared his intention of paying her frequent visits, and desired that she might be occasionally driven over to the Manor-House, when her malady would permit her taking such an excursion.

Captain Molloy had recently come into the unexplained possession of money, evidenced by an ostentatious display of small bank notes ; a species of glorification which must have been gratifying to himself from the same cause that made it startling to others—its unprecedented novelty. Little reason as we have afforded for respecting either his principles or his conduct, it grieves us to state the means to which he had stooped for relieving himself from his long-standing complaint of impecuniosity. Conceiving that his grandson Valentine, the young imp of mischief, who had hitherto

been the plague of his life, might by a little tuition be made to minister to its support, he gave him secret instructions in the game of whist, and taught him a system of signs whereby his pupil, with the aid of a few simple and natural movements and sounds, could telegraph the court-cards and the number of trumps in any hand that he might overlook. Repeated experiments having tested the boy's proficiency in this hopeful accomplishment, the Captain made a visit with his family to Cheltenham, taking up his residence in a boarding-house notorious for the high play of its inmates, and which possessed also the additional recommendation of numbering among its residents the identical Nabob with whom Matilda had flirted upon a former occasion, and whom she was now determined to entrap. No wonder that the father, assisted by such trickery, played his cards much better than his daughter. Everything answered to his wish. Valentine, as quick as he was mischievous, enacted his part to admiration, running in and out of the card-room as if in mere frolic, pretending to

quarrel with his grandfather for always playing at those stupid cards, and being angrily desired in reply to quit the room and cease his importunities if he wished to avoid chastisement. In addition to the stakes, the Captain made bets: it is almost needless to add that he generally won; the pittance of his gains, which was bestowed upon his young confederate, was wasted in pastry, fireworks, and gallopings upon hired horses; and of the remainder a portion was devoted by the winner to the better equipment of his daughters, of whom, in the midst of all his failings, he was both fond and proud. Hence the flaming pelisse of Matilda, which was destined to aid her other wiles and allurements in dazzling the senses of the Nabob, a bilious, elderly, inquisitive little gentleman, who was famous in Cheltenham for his interrogative flirtations with pretty girls, and for asking them every question in the world except *the* question.

Valentine, too knowing not to see and take advantage of his position, soon insisted upon a larger share of the spoil, under a

threat of disclosing their plot; and when he had extorted what he demanded, lavished it in precocious riot and folly. Young as he was, he had been more than once brought home intoxicated, to the infinite alarm of his confederate, who naturally dreaded the disclosures that might escape from him in this state: nor were his sober moods much less perilous, for in the confidence of impunity, so far as his grandfather was concerned, his freaks, outrages, and audacity became every day more intolerable. Urged by these considerations, as well as by the departure of the principal whist-players from the boarding-house, Molloy returned home, to the grievous mortification of Matilda, all whose machinations and manœuvres, aided by dress, undress, and address, had failed to secure the wily, unhookable Nabob.

Though it might be said of the Captain, as of many other Irishmen, that money burnt in his pockets, they had latterly suffered no combustion, from the total want of pecuniary fuel. There were creditors enough who would have been glad to prevent any

accident of this nature, had they known the comparative plenitude of his purse; but theirs were the very last claims that he thought of satisfying. No;—though he might not have gotten his present winnings like a gentleman, he was determined to spend them like one; so he resolved to give a handsome dinner to his friends and neighbours, to be succeeded by a match of pigeon-shooting, for which he had already made arrangements, calculating that if he could get up a game of whist afterwards, with Valentine for his telegraph, he might repay himself the whole expense. Besides, now that Algernon Cavendish had quitted the field, his scheming thoughts reverted to Walter and his daughter Ellen, in favour of whom he was most anxious to conciliate the wealthy and childless Adam Brown, an object which he deemed most likely to be attained by the display of his own hospitality and improved circumstances.

The pigeon-match was to take place at a farm-house called the Grange, situated at about three miles distance from Woodcote,

in the direction of Charlton Abbots, and the parties concerned were to meet at Captain Molloy's. Some of those who were to participate in the *sport* (as it is strangely called) were already assembled, provided with their fowling-pieces, shot-belts, and powder-flasks. These were presently joined by Brown, who, though no sportsman, was glad of an excuse for a long walk and a morning's amusement; and by Dawson, the apothecary, whose far-reaching thoughts suggesting the possibility of friends shooting one another instead of the birds, by no means an unusual result, whispered to him that he was imperatively bound, as a good Christian in bad circumstances, to be in readiness for any such deplorable calamity and profitable job. Mr. Dawson, moreover, was a humane man; and when he reflected that two of the party, recently settled in the neighbourhood, had large young families, all subject, of course, to the measles and hooping-cough, to say nothing of scarlatina, he felt that he ought not to lose an opportunity of making an acquaintance which

might eventually enable him to render very material service to those innocent and interesting sufferers *in futuro*.

"The last time I went to a match of pigeon-shooting," cried Molloy, making his rattan perform the sword exercise with such slashing animation that his companions kept at a prudent distance, "I remember I rode to the place of meeting on my famous hunter Paddy-whack. There was the Marquis of Mayo, Lord Popham, Sir Charles Bangor, Walter Butler—no, Walter wasn't there—it was Sir William Wingham, and myself; and *by* the powers! I never shot so well in all my life. Killed every bird but one, and he was knocked all to pieces. Beat all my competitors hollow, and yet the others had double-barrelled guns, while I had nothing in the world to shoot with but——"

"The long bow," interposed Crab, "was once considered the best weapon to shoot with. The ancient ones were of a single piece; the modern long bows have a thin piece of ash joined to them: but perhaps I interrupt you,—pray go on."

"I was only about to add that mine was a single-barrel—and a famous cold I caught that same day, by shooting without my hat; but I'm always catching cold in my head."

"His own fault,—he's always going out without anything in it," whispered Crab to Brown.

"And that same day," pursued Molloy, "I made a party with General Hooker to go fishing in the river Newry;—by the bye, Crab, what was the weight of that fine jack you caught last week in Langholme water?"

"Twelve pounds."

"By the powers! is that all? The very last jack I caught in the river Newry weighed twenty-four pounds."

"Hang it!" muttered Crab, aside; "I wish I could catch my jack again, I would double the Captain's weight instantly, and make him a forty-eight pounder."

"As for the poor General, he would hardly have hooked a fish, if I hadn't been at his elbow abetting and aiding."

"*Rodomont-ading* and *gascon-ading*,"

said Crab, patting the tops of his fingers, and looking up to the sky, as if lost in an etymological reverie, "are derived, I think, from the boastful hero of Ariosto, and the braggadocio character of the Gascon French."

"I brought the General home with me to Clognakilty House," pursued Molloy: "there was a party of six of us at dinner, and each of us drank five bottles of claret to his own cheek."

"That's more than I can swallow," observed Crab very quietly.

"And yet I was as sober as a judge,—must have been, for I won twenty pounds afterwards at cards, though I'm no great hand at whist."

"If you had played at brag, you must have won forty at the very least; it's a *very* gambling game."

With such adroitness did the Captain's assailant manage these sidewind attacks, either by dropping his voice, or by dealing in equivoques which might bear no offensive construction, that, without provoking their object, they afforded infinite amusement to

the rest of the party, who prosecuted their walk with much good humour, until they arrived at the Grange, when, on preparing to load their pieces, it was found that every one of the powder-flasks had been completely emptied of its contents. At this discovery a look of blank bewilderment sat upon the features of the whole party; each stood staring at the other in silent amazement, utterly unable to account for the phenomenon, until a shriek of elf-like laughter from the neighbouring thicket, followed by a shrill cry of "Crikey! *what* fun!" betrayed at once the author of the mischief.

Looking forward to the importance of Valentine's assistance at the after-dinner whist-table, Molloy, irritated as he was, prudently held his peace; but one of the party, a pompous, pragmatical Major Starchley, being by no means disposed to submit patiently to the insult, angrily exclaimed, "So, Captain Molloy! this is another prank, I find, of your hopeful grandson. I recollect now that when we took off our belts and powder-flasks he carried them all out of

the room : but I'll have one sport if I can't have another. I'll beat the little rascal to a mummy—a jelly—a nothing !" So saying he snatched up Brown's cane, and set off in the direction of the thicket, although Molloy bawled after him, " Lord love you, Major, you may as well try to catch the wind, or a Will-o'-the-wisp, for the young dog is here and there and everywhere, and all at the same time." This averment was soon confirmed, for the Major presently returned from his vain pursuit, endeavouring to look particularly calm, though he was half frantic with rage, and protesting that he felt as cool as a cucumber, though he was covered with perspiration. After a considerable delay a fresh supply of gunpowder was procured, when the party completed their match and walked back to Woodcote, all professing most unmerciful intentions towards the Captain's dinner, for which their exertions had given them an unusual appetite, and all carrying their threats into full execution. After the demolition of the viands, the guests proceeded

to the discussion of the wine, which the host decanted with his own experienced hands, declaring that he had had it for many years in his cellar, and that it ought to be good, since he had paid a long price for it. Of this assertion, strange to say, the latter half was true, for the landlord of the Green Man, from whom he had procured it only the day before, refused to supply him until he had paid off an old score of considerable standing. That Valentine, after such an irremissible offence, remained *perdu*, it is scarcely necessary to state; notwithstanding which the Captain got up a game of cards, and contrived to be a winner, detaining his friends at the whist-table until it was time to take their departure, when they were still longer delayed by the violence of a heat-engendered storm, which vented itself in a heavy rain. This soon ceased, but as the unusual darkness of the night threatened its quick recurrence, the whole party assembled on the green in front of the cottage, to debate as to the mode of reaching their respective homes, for Brown had not ordered his carriage, in-

tending to walk back with his friend Crab—a resolution which he now petulantly regretted.

“Ah! if this had happened in London now—only got to bawl out ‘coach,’ and a dozen hacks run over you in a minute, splashing all your friends with kennel-water. No such luxuries or comforts in the country—must trudge afoot if it rains pitchforks and red-hot pokers—chance of being knocked down by the bludgeon of a rustic highwayman—if not, ten to one you tumble into a ditch, where you pass the night, with a dead dog or a litter of kittens for your pillow.” This tirade was suddenly interrupted by the sharp snapping report of a cracker, which bounced, and exploded, and performed the most fantastic evolutions around Crab, whom it baited and tormented although he jumped in various directions to avoid it, exhibiting, as he did so, such a ludicrous mixture of alarm and alacrity, that the merchant burst into a fit of irresistible laughter. His merriment was sobered, after the lapse of a minute, by a

mysterious hissing noise, appearing to proceed from the bottom of his own back, speedily followed by such a continuous shower of sparks upon the calves of his legs, which were only defended by thin stockings, that he began to "wheel about and turn about and jump Jim Crow," with a vivacity that would have done honour to Mr. Rice himself.

"Some more villainy of that accursed young fiend!" he panted out, rubbing his tingling calves when the gunpowder serpent had exhausted its fire. "This is an assault, and I'll have him up before the magistrates to-morrow—no safety for our lives—intolerable—monstrous—atrocious!"

"You really surprise me," said Crab, in a bland voice of wonder, "for just now, when I was cutting capers, though I cannot pretend to compete with you in agility, you seemed to think it a fit subject for laughter."

"Gentlemen," cried the Major, "we must rid the neighbourhood of this pestilent little firebrand, or there will be neither peace nor safety for us. It is lucky that he

has spared me any additional outrage of this nature, for my temper, when once roused, is violent; and I feel that if he had presumed to——” The rest the winds dispersed in empty air, for at that instant a large cracker, bounding from the ground, hit him so sharp a blow on the nose, that he had only time to ejaculate—“The Lord deliver me!” and hasten away with his handkerchief to his face, to prevent the blood from soiling his clothes. His precipitate retreat was the signal for a shriek of elfin laughter, followed by the usual cry, sounding as if only a very few yards distant, for the darkness of the night made its utterer bold.

Scared at a triumphant cachinnation that seemed to be almost preternatural, as it echoed from the surrounding darkness, and apprehensive of some further assault if they remained, the Captain’s visitants made the best of their way to their respective homes, uttering maledictions, and vowing vengeance against the young demon by whom the neighbourhood was haunted and infested, although the echoes of his laughter still

followed them, as if in mockery of their menaces. Lucky and opportune was their withdrawal, for Valentine, having the material for a fresh supply of fireworks in the powder he had recently purloined, meant to be exceedingly liberal in the disposal of what he had previously manufactured. By means of a piece of twine and a small fish-hook, he had attached them to the coats of his victims, stealing behind them for the purpose as they stood chatting together outside the cottage, and saving himself from detection by the unusual darkness of the night, combined with his own unparagoned adroitness and audacity.

CHAPTER IV.

IMPLICIT as was Allan Latimer's reliance upon the honour and purity of Isola, and angry as he was with himself if any derogatory thoughts stole for a single moment into his mind, he could not utterly exclude a vague feeling of—what was it—jealousy?—No—of regret, of apprehension, of misgiving, when he recalled the colloquy with Cavendish, which he had so unintentionally overheard. That she should accept the pocket-book and its contents did not surprise him, for it had reference to her vocal exertions at the concert; but that she should suffer him to make his subsequent insulting propositions, that she should even lead him to believe in her concurrence, and treat the affair subsequently with such utter levity,

filled him with amazement, even after making all due allowance for the eccentricity of her character, and her avowed disregard of appearances, so long as she preserved her own respect and merited the respect of others. Short as was the interval before the mystery must be cleared up, he found it difficult to restrain his impatience, and it was with a beating heart, as well as an ardent feeling of curiosity, that he proceeded to the Quadrant rather before the appointed hour on the following night. Isola had talked of asking a dozen people, but there were twice that number in her room, consisting mostly of her titled patrons and patronesses, and including among the former several of those who had professed themselves smitten with her charms, and whose advances she had repelled with ridicule and banter.

Dressed in a style of unusual elegance, but with that attention to strict decorum which some of her fashionable friends had stigmatised as prudish, alternately laughing, rattling, and singing, for she was in a state of the most joyous excitement, Isola put

forth all her powers of fascination, and never perhaps had she exerted them with such an unbounded success. After warbling an impassioned love-strain, or chanting some solemn *preghiera* with a pathos and sublimity that threw her auditors into raptures, she would turn their tears to smiles by a girlish vivacity and bewitching playfulness that were equally irresistible; or she would surprise those who had the capacity to understand her, by some merry conceit, or unexpected remark equally original and profound. All were enchanted, all pressed around her with the warmest expressions of admiration, when she laughingly exclaimed, "Pooh! pooh! this is nothing but flattery—you have heard me to as much advantage, or more, on other occasions—and you all know, as well as I can tell you, that no London party can be brilliant without novelty, without a special lion or lioness,—in consideration of which, and in order, moreover, that I may entitle myself to your eternal gratitude, I have provided for your particular entertainment this night a lion

par excellence—a dandy-lion, a love-making lion—who, like Nick Bottom the weaver, shall aggravate his voice so that he will roar you as gently as any sucking dove.”

“Who is it,—who is it? What is it?” inquired a dozen voices at once. “Nay—if I tell you my secret, there’s an end of the curiosity which I am glad to see that I have piqued. Only promise to follow my instructions—be noisy when I request you—silent when I bid you—but above all be sure to laugh heartily and unanimously when my lion is let loose from his den, and I warrant he shall afford us some capital sport.” To these conditions, prescribed with a mixture of archness and gravity that increased the mystification of her auditors, all gave a ready assent; when Isola reseated herself at the piano, and turned their attention for the moment into another channel by enchaining their ears to the appropriate recitative of “*Ecco il 'punto,*” from Mozart’s *Clemenza di Tito*.

Cavendish in the mean while, punctual to his appointment, dressed out in the very ex-

tremity of the mode, elated beyond measure at the thought of triumphing over the numerous distinguished competitors who had sued in vain for the favours of the inexorable Signora, presented himself at the exact hour agreed upon, unsuspecting of the part he was destined to play in the evening's entertainment. On the street door being opened, old Antonio, who had been tutored for the purpose, and who quite enjoyed his own portion of the plot, informed him that as some particular friends had called, to whom his mistress would not for the world make known the fact of her appointment with Mr. Cavendish, she had directed that he should be shown into a small back room, until she could dismiss her unwelcome visitants, which she would do as quickly as possible. "Anywhere, anywhere," whispered the coxcomb—"but I hope these confawnded bores won't stay long, for I see the cawriage is at the door."

"Follow me, Sir, if you please, and don't let your footsteps be heard," said the Italian, stealthily ascending the stairs, and blowing

out the candle as he entered the back room, while he pronounced a whispered malediction upon the wind, as if it had been done by accident ; after which he took the arm of his companion, for they were now in total darkness, led him a few steps forward, and cautioning him to remain perfectly quiet until he was summoned, closed a door upon his prisoner, noiselessly bolted it on the outside, and withdrew to give the preconcerted signal which announced the successful entrapment of their victim. It was recognised by a cough from his mistress, when the old Italian retired, his face crumpled and puckered up, and his whole frame shaking with suppressed laughter and anticipated fun.

In spite of the solicitations of her visitants, who were becoming clamorous for the exhibition of the promised lion, Isola continued some time longer to sing and to launch the most vivacious sallies, enjoying the thoughts of her prisoner's impatience ; but at length she began to make arrangements for his liberation. The company being led to the top of the stairs, she bade them good night

in an audible voice, as if they were all retiring, after which they stealthily returned to the drawing-room, where she cautioned them to silence by laying her forefinger upon her laughing lips. The door was now gently opened, and candles were placed upon the tables of the inner room, until it was as brilliantly lighted up as the principal apartment, when she walked round on tiptoe to her guests, reminding them in a whisper of their promise to answer the first roar of the lion with a roar of simultaneous laughter. Satisfied with their preliminary arrangements, she crossed the floor, tapped at the door of the closet that contained her prisoner, and demanded in a subdued voice—"Are you ready, Mr. Cavendish—are you ready?"

"Yes, dearest Signora," was replied from within; "and confoundedly tired of being thus boxed up in the dark."

"Provoking!" resumed Isola—"that stupid Antonio has locked the door and taken away the key. You will find the bell-rope in the corner; ring it, and he will come and let you out."

Little suspecting that the closet had been fitted up by Isola as a capacious shower-bath, the self-immolating victim did as he was bid ; when instantly the loud plash of falling waters was heard, accompanied by clamorous cries of " Hallo !—what the devil !—curse it !—let me out—help—help—help !" and followed by violent kicks, bumps, and thumps against the door. Terrified by these sounds and outcries, of which they were utterly unable to conjecture the meaning, several of the ladies screamed in dismay, imploring Isola not to let out such a raging and rampant lion, or rather madman ; while the gentleman, beginning to suspect that they might really have to deal with an unchained maniac, snatched up chairs and sofa cushions, and stood in an attitude of defence,—demonstrations and attitudes which produced so ludicrous an effect, that Isola, shrieking with laughter, could hardly find breath to say, " Remember your promise of returning roar for roar."

The heavy pattering and plashing began to diminish, although the vociferous oaths

and exclamations were if possible increased, when Isola drew back the bolt, threw open the door, and out burst the soused and dripping dandy, saluted by a shout of laughter from the whole party, amid which the convulsive merriment of Isola was the most ungovernable. All his senses confounded by his previous inexplicable ducking, and now suddenly delivered from a dark closet into a lighted chamber, occupied, as it appeared, by terrified females, and armed men in various postures of defence, no wonder that he stood staring at them for a few moments utterly bewildered and aghast; while they, as they marked his uncurled locks, his bedraggled garments, and the forlorn amazement of his moon-struck visage, could not refrain from a second cachinnation still more spasmodic and general than the first.

As he recovered the use of his eyes and faculties he began to recognise some of the faces by which he was surrounded, and to become aware of the trick that had been played him, when the infuriated dandy doubled his fist at Isola, exclaiming—"This

is an infamous piece of treachery!" rushed from the room, and scrambled down the stairs, venting—and for once in a natural, unaffected tone—a torrent of oaths and maledictions.

"Treachery!" said Isola, as soon as her risible ebullitions would allow her to speak. "Ladies and gentlemen, I appeal to you"—and Allan Latimer thought, as she said so, that her eye was particularly directed to himself—"This saucy coxcomb—with what presumptuous hopes I dare not trust myself even to imagine, had the audacity, when he heard that I intended to leave London this night, to propose that he should be my companion, and I suffered him to visit me in the delusion of his own vain conceit. Have I not done even more than I allowed him to hope—have I not literally showered honours upon his head, and made him my Knight Companion——of the Bath?—More than my implied promise have I performed, and the gratitude of this drowned and disappointed dandy is to charge me with treachery! If there be any here who have ever

dreamt of imitating his offence, I desire them to take warning by his unhappy fate."

More than one of her male auditors quailed beneath the significant menace of her eye, while the looks of others seemed to intimate that in their opinion she had taken an unfair advantage of her victim. "So!" said Isola, reading their thoughts, "you think this a coarse and unfeminine practical joke, little in accordance with my position as a servant of the public; but they have not bought the right to insult me with impunity: and how can I prevent them—I, a poor, lone, unprotected woman,—except by having recourse to a little stratagem and cunning, which are ever the strength of the weak? For social outrages which the law cannot reach, you men have invented the law of honour; we have no such remedy, or I would have made fire, instead of water, the instrument of my just vengeance. As it was, I met a gross insult by a gross retaliation, and I maintain that I was fully warranted in doing so. Nay, I am prepared for much more desperate measures than this harmless sous-

ing of a saucy coxcomb. I have Italian blood—ay, and brave blood too, in my veins ; and if personal indignity were to be offered to me—of which I have sometimes entertained a fear—this is what I would instantly plunge into the heart of my audacious insulter.”

With these words she snatched from beneath her robe an unsheathed dagger, brandishing it in a menacing attitude, while her features were lighted up with such a fierce beauty, that several of her visitants drew back with an expression of considerable alarm. “Nay, nay,” laughed the Italian, resuming her gracious smile, “I am only supposing a case, but I am not sorry to make it publicly known that I carry about me something equivalent to steel-traps and spring-guns for the punishment of trespassers. And now, after thanking you all for the hearty roar with which you treated my lion, I must give you your dismissal. My carriage has been some time at the door, and I cannot wait any longer for the runaway and recreant knight who was to have been my

champion." So saying she bade them all a courteous good night;—the visitants departed, some of them abashed and frightened, even while they were most fascinated with her vivacious sallies:—Isola, throwing a roquelaure over the dress she wore, jumped into the carriage; her maid followed:—Antonio took his place in the rumble, and the postilion, impatient at having been so long delayed, drove off at a rapid pace.

"As I condemned the huckstering of your hospital bazaars," said Isola to Allan, on her return to London, "and maintained that when charity ceases to be its own reward, it becomes nothing better than barter, and the sale-room a Vanity Fair, it may be right to apprise you that I have refused all remuneration for my trip to Canterbury. I sought England, as I have often told you, for the express purpose of raising a certain amount of money in as short a time as possible, in the attainment of which avowed object you, probably, think me rather unscrupulous; but as I have not taken out a hawker's or pedlar's licence for

the purpose, I do not feel myself warranted to deal in charity."

"Yet in a paper of yesterday I saw you accused of having demanded the most exorbitant terms from the managers of this very charity. You will write to contradict it, of course."

"Not I: I know myself to be guilty of so many offences with which I am not charged, that I hardly feel authorised to defend myself against charges that are unjust. There is something like the consolation of martyrdom in submitting to unmerited imputations. A brand of this nature, like a self-inflicted penance, converts even the marks of seeming shame into an atoning honour. And now, having endeavoured to show you that, however fond I may be of money, I am not *always* mercenary, I am ready to comply with your request, and to introduce you to some of the eminent artists and literati who have done me the honour to seek my acquaintance. There is to be a grand conversazione to-night at the house of one of our most dis-

tinguished men of science, for which I have procured you an invitation, and where you will meet all the choice spirits of London, intellectual, scientific, and artistical."

"I shall be delighted to attend you. But how comes it, Isola, that these meetings seem never to be convened at the houses of our most successful writers?"

"In the first place, because they are too poor; in the second, because science is the fashion, and literature has worn itself out of vogue. Can you wonder at it? After all, it is but a round robin ending where it began—a treadmill in which the human faculties go plodding on for ever in the same steps, seemingly unconscious that one literary cycle is but a copy of its predecessor. As to the poor Muse, she only shows herself to solicit charity, hiding her impoverished head in the gratuitous corner of a Magazine or the almshouse of an Annual. Our poets are no longer able to keep a Pegasus:—

'Their unaspiring hack

Jogs on the broad way and the beaten track'—

of prose;—they have given up the thankless

and unprofitable trade of tying up old flowers into new nosegays ; and, preferring solid pudding to empty praise, are content to be better paid as critics, biographers, and editors. People had long been getting indifferent to poetry ; it may now be almost said that they hate it."

"Oh, surely not ! Ours is perhaps a matter-of-fact, practical, utilitarian age : we may have men like the mathematician who objected to the dramas of Shakspeare that they proved nothing ; or others whose hard-working, calculating minds must see a tangible, gainful result before they can admire ; but even these mental mechanics must have a sabbath for their souls, and where can they find it so well as in poetry ? No, the love of poetry is in our nature ; it may slumber, but it cannot altogether die. Its forms may change,—rhymes and metres may go out of vogue, but its spirit will survive,—nay, does survive and flourish too, for what are many of our popular novels and works of fiction but prose poems ? The poetry of the stage has undergone a similar change.

People sitting at home, instead of going to the theatre, read plays in three volumes instead of five acts, and then complain that dramatic literature is extinct."

"Perhaps so; but that does not disprove my assertion that literature and all the imitative arts have had their Augustan eras, and attained the utmost perfection that man's limited faculties can accomplish, thousands of years ago, leaving to the luckless moderns the humble task of endeavouring to build up another Augustan era upon the model, and probably out of the ruins, of some predecessor."

"But always with the hope, and never without the chance, of improving."

"Indeed! If Homer, Virgil, Sappho, Anacreon were to revive, where would they find themselves eclipsed in their respective departments of literature? Were Phidias, Vitruvius, Raphael to be re-animated, what would they think of their modern competitors in sculpture, architecture, and painting? But now mark, Camillo mio, the difference between the

stationary or retrogressive character of the fine arts, and the ever-advancing march of science; for if the immortal Newton, or any other equally distinguished philosopher of a past age, were to be evoked from his grave, he would find himself, in many things, as far below the knowledge of his present successors, as he was superior to the ignorance of his contemporaries. The study of nature is, in fact, inexhaustible, and science, therefore, can never come to a stop."

"Every age, nevertheless, has its great literary names, and if writers attain less individual eminence than heretofore, it is because their art is so wisely diffused, and the number of competitors so largely increased. Has any author, at any era, attained greater renown or been more nobly remunerated for his talents than Sir Walter Scott? The very progressiveness that you claim for science seems to deny permanency of fame even to its most successful cultivators."

"But, at all events, what they do achieve

they win and enjoy instantly, instead of sacrificing a life to its attainment, like Sir Walter. They awake some fine morning and find themselves famous, or, perhaps, wealthy, if they have made any discovery that can be applied to profitable purposes—a stimulus to which the most philosophic of philosophers is not likely to be insensible.”

“Especially if he recollects Lord Bacon’s saying that speculative philosophy is like the lark, which soars upwards and returns to earth without gaining by its flight; while experimental philosophy is like the falcon, which mounts as high as the lark, but seldom comes down without its reward.”

“Thank you for your apt quotation, for it confirms my statement. Yes, every scientific explorer is a sort of Columbus, who, if he does not discover a new world, may, like our navigators, perpetuate his name by giving it to some new headland or promontory in the sphere of knowledge upon which he adventures, and thus immortalise himself while he is benefiting his fellow-creatures. What are pyramids and mausoleums

compared to the sublime apotheosis of Herschel, who has a planet for his monument? What sepulchral lamp can emblazon a name so nobly and so extinguishably as that of Davy? Volta and Galvani have built up an electric cenotaph for the eternal preservation of their renown; and even the botanists who have consigned their names to the frail petals of a new flower, have found its cup a more enduring sarcophagus, its honey-dew a more perennial embalment, than all the art lavished by the ancient Egyptians upon their mummies."

"You speak, Isola, as if you envied them their deathless celebrity."

"Not I, indeed, but I may perhaps feel it more keenly than another, because *my* celebrity, such as it is, is so mournfully fleeting and evanescent. An actor is only a human ephemera,

'Light as the mote that danceth in the beam,

His life a flash, his memory a dream;'

but the songstress, who lives only in the dreamy memory of the ear, can hardly be said to possess any other than the audible

existence of a moment. The shadow of smoke upon water is more solid and lasting. Her life is a sound, her memory its echo, and both are forgotten almost as soon as heard. Like the swan, she must sing her own elegy, for she will have no other. But shame on me to be talking in this querulous mood; I, who have so many causes for joy and gratitude! Away with such unthankful strains, and let us hurry to our conversation, for we shall hardly make our way into the Doctor's crowded rooms if we delay our departure any longer."

Stimulated by the presence of their friendly and enlightened host, as well as by the various objects of science and *virtù* distributed through the rooms, the party fell into little knots, each engaged in some animated discussion which, without being pedantic or over-blue as to literature, or too technically scientific for listeners of ordinary intelligence, afforded an abundance of social enjoyment to a very numerous collection of visitants, while it avoided a single recurrence to the common topics in other coteries—the

opera, the fashions, and scandal. Allan was here introduced to several really great men,—the aristocracy of nature—writers and artists, with whose names and works he had long been familiar, whose acquaintance he was proportionably gratified to make, and in whose society he passed a most delightful evening.

On the following day he was still more gratified by accompanying Isola to the studios of London's most distinguished sculptors, in all of whom he noticed that courteous urbanity and polished refinement of manners which in every age has characterized the cultivators of the fine arts. "I agree with you," said Isola, as they walked home together, "that sculpture and painting have attained great present perfection in that which may be called their mechanical department—the mere imitation of nature—especially in portraits and busts;—but in their loftier range—in the spiritual and allegorical, in ideal and superhuman beauty—in embodying the invisible, and giving a tangible form to the dim mysterious yearn-

ings of the soul, I do not recognise the same pre-eminence."

"And to what would you attribute this inferiority—supposing it to exist?"

"Partly to the Reformation, and to the severe Iconoclastic spirit which broke up the long established union between the fine arts and religion. Genius is a flower that blows most luxuriantly in the full light of heaven. Never attaining its perfect development without enthusiasm, or that feeling of a private revelation which unites the God within us to the God above us, it has never, at any period of the world, accomplished an unchallenged triumph, or sent forth an undisputed masterpiece, except when its efforts have been sublimised by the influence of religion. You must combine the stimulants of both worlds—you must make the work of the artist a gratifying act of devout worship, as well as a means of fame and wealth, if you would raise the man above himself and lift his statue or his painting out of its materiality. Of this reverential

art, which, when employed on a sacred subject, would deem it sacrilege to be satisfied with anything less than absolute and uniform perfection, you will find a striking illustration in the Theseus of the Elgin Marbles. Sculptors travel from all parts of Europe to study and admire the back of that celebrated figure, which, from its position in the pediment of the Parthenon, could never have been seen, was never intended to be seen. What cared Phidias for the eyes of man? He believed that he was sculpturing a demigod—that the goddess Minerva would see it, and upon her altar he would not offer up any but a finished, faultless image.”

“And to this feeling you would attribute, I suppose, the general superiority of modern artists in Catholic countries?”

“Yes, in their loftier conceptions. Nay, more—I would maintain, that without a similar sentiment in the spectator, he cannot fully and fairly appreciate, or even understand, the work produced by such inspiration. The impressions of a believing pagan

contemplating a statue of Jupiter must have been totally different from ours. He looked up to it reverently as an embodiment of his own idea of omnipotence, which he could compare with his own imaginary heaven: we look down upon it contemptuously as to its divine claims, and can therefore measure it with nothing but earth and man."

"Spurzheim, I am told, maintains that all the statues of the pagan deities exhibit the exact craniological formation which their respective characters would require."

"Well, that is his religion, and so far he can admire them more profoundly and devoutly than any man who is not a craniologist."

"Among the Greeks, too, there was a constant and high competition in art, as well as opportunities for its triumphant display, which are of much more rare occurrence in modern times."

"Yes, and great men without great occasions are like uninflated balloons, which, however vast may be their capacity, have

neither means to display it, nor to attain that proper elevation which may enable them to attract the eyes of mankind. In these peaceful times we have no triumphs to record, except those of the never-ceasing combatant—Death : our sculpture, therefore, is chiefly monumental.”

“Of which we saw a beautiful specimen this morning in the first studio we visited, although the bust of the deceased appeared to me deficient in animation, perhaps from the want of a chiselled pupil to the eye.”

“As it was not intended to represent the living man, but to give an outline of his lineaments when dead, an intention to be gathered from the ungarmented state of the bust, I think the artist was right in omitting the pupil, which is so expressive of life. Sculpture professes to imitate form only, and not colour ; I question, therefore, whether the pupil ought ever to be marked.”

“There is classical authority for it, however, and even for its representation by precious stones.”

“There are classical barbarisms, as in the

mixture of coloured marbles in a bust, which only teach us what we ought to avoid. And now I will mention a social barbarism which we ought equally to eschew, namely, usurping and wasting the time of a companion, as I have been doing for the last hour, when you know that he has an engagement of business which ought not to be broken. Look at yonder clock. Have you not a lesson to give at this hour ?”

“Thank you for the hint : but you could hardly do less than give it me ; for, as you make me completely forget time, it is clearly your duty to remind me of its lapse. How he varies in his pace ! In your society, how he plies his wings ; in that of others, how he hobbles upon crutches ! I will only see you to your door, and then jump into a cab, and drive to my appointment.”

CHAPTER V.

THERE is a flower in the fields, "And maidens call it Love-in-idleness," whose name is strictly applicable to the attachment which springs up in the bosom of youth, not so much from a well-considered preference of its object, as from the want of occupation, as well as from the absence of any other recipient for the affections. Such, in a great measure, had been the regard of Allan for Ellen Molloy—the attraction of propinquity—the preference arising from circumstance, rather than sympathy. No wonder that the impression was gradually worn out by the new sensations now passing over his mind in such rapid succession. No wonder that his intenerated heart, instead of being fortified against fresh attractions,

should only be rendered more susceptible to their influence, even as cinders are more easily inflammable than the coal which has never felt the fire. A much deeper and more durable impression must have been speedily obliterated, especially in the bosom of one so sensitive as Allan to the combined influence of genius and the Graces, by a creature so rarely gifted, so truly fascinating as Isola.

The chance which had procured him her acquaintance and friendship, had indeed thrown into his way a perilous—an almost irresistible temptation. Ardent as was his admiration of beauty, he might have repelled the attraction of her personal charms; but her various other enchantments, her unrivalled talents, her girlish vivacity, united to so much sterling good sense, and above all her strict propriety and purity of conduct amid solicitations and enticements that many similarly circumstanced would have found it difficult to withstand,—these were daily making deeper inroads upon his imagination and his feelings. Persuading himself, with

the common delusion of young men, that he was only rendering a just homage to her unparagoned merits, when he was suffering his heart to be unconsciously penetrated with a new attachment, he dreamt not of withdrawing himself from a society so delightful and so unobjectionable. On the contrary, their friendship assumed every day a character of closer intimacy. Isola had undertaken to give him lessons in singing ; they performed duets together out of the popular operas ; and, as he listened to her exquisite voice, addressing him often in the language of the most impassioned love, his heart thrilled with what he believed to be an intense admiration of her vocal powers, though the source of his emotion was of a far deeper and more tender nature. Under such a teacher, and with such stimulants, it may well be supposed that his progress was rapid ; Isola, astonished at his pathetic tones, and the expressive language of his eyes, was enthusiastic in his praises ; and the enraptured pupil found it exceedingly difficult to tear himself away from such delicious meet-

ings. When not in her immediate society, he was always hovering around her, attending invariably at the Opera when she performed, to offer up the silent homage of his thrilling heart, for his emotions were too profound to seek a vent in outward expressions of applause; and in her absence he was constantly thinking of her, although he remained unconscious of the potent spell she was exercising. Such insensible impressions are the most dangerous, and perhaps the most pleasant; for an undeveloped love, like the unblown rose-bud, gives a promise of fragrance, beauty, and delight, while the thorns are yet too minute to excite suspicion of a wound.

Pretending to find some annoyance in his lodgings, he removed to larger and better furnished apartments in the Quadrant, immediately opposite to Isola's, which was the real secret of the change; for although a day rarely passed in which they did not meet, he could here catch additional glimpses of her, especially when she went out into her little garden, as was her custom every morn-

ing, to trim her flowers. This occasioned him to be more at home than had hitherto been his wont ; and when he knew her to be absent, he beguiled the time in writing.

At her suggestion he had composed a short poem on an event of passing interest, which, being inserted in a popular magazine, and copied into one of the papers, had attracted considerable notice. Thus encouraged, he became a regular contributor, both of prose and poetry, for which he was liberally remunerated ; and finding his pecuniary means so unexpectedly increased, he thought himself warranted in departing from the system of strict economy which he had hitherto observed. London society, independently of its charm of novelty, had addressed itself in a peculiar manner to his tastes and sympathies, especially when he contrasted it with that of Woodcote. Literature and science had here fixed their headquarters : here were there not only cheap exhibitions of all the wonders and masterpieces of nature and of art, but accessible associations for the culture of every taste,

the prosecution of every refined and elevated pursuit. With several of the most eminent men of genius and talent he had already made acquaintance, and invitations to some recent evening parties had apprised him that in London it is easy to procure, at a very moderate expense, intellectual gratifications of a very high order—admission to the companionship of artists, actors, authors—of all, in short, who can charm and enlighten the social circle. From among these he selected a certain number of associates; but as the purity of his moral perceptions remained as delicate and immaculate as ever, notwithstanding the corrupting influences of the metropolis, he endeavoured to exclude as far as possible all those depraved or dissipated characters whose gifts and attainments could no more reconcile him to their vices, than could the glittering embellishments of a coffin to the corrupting corpse within it.

A man of talent and fair fame, even though his position be not a very elevated one, may assemble in London a company

such as we have been describing at less cost than he could entertain a party of block-heads from a higher sphere. It was Allan's pride, as soon as he made this discovery, to reduce it to proof, by giving small supper-parties at his lodgings. Accompanied by some of her female friends, Isola, when she found how carefully his guests had been selected, consented now and then to meet them, and as Allan had provided himself with a piano, she would occasionally sing for their entertainment, a favour never bestowed upon any other, and for which she now accounted by playfully declaring that as she had adopted him for a brother, she considered herself at home in his lodgings. This operated as such a prodigious attraction, that he was repeatedly obliged to refuse invitations to people soliciting them; the knowledge of the difficulty increased, as usual, the anxiety for admittance; his *petit soupers* became the fashion; men of rank as well as of high intellectual eminence were happy to make his acquaintance, and procure a seat at his board: and the warm-

hearted host, flattered by such visitants, and anxious to do honour both to them and to Isola, the magnet by which they were mainly attracted, deviated more perhaps than strict prudence would warrant from the simplicity of his former repasts.

At his outset he had professed no stronger allurements to his humble board than "the feast of reason and the flow of soul," so often quoted and so seldom witnessed; but the sparkling of iced champagne now mingled with the coruscations of wit: Perigord pies were discussed, as well as subjects of literature, art, and science; and the guests, some of whom were more distinguished for swallowing than for uttering good things, protracted these symposia to a late hour. His whole life having hitherto necessitated the practice of a strict economy, he had never acquired the habit of tasting wine, and still restricted himself to lemonade or water; but being naturally hospitable, as well as sanguine as to his continued means of being so, he found it difficult to check an expenditure which he knew to be unselfish, and

which even assumed the garb of a generous virtue.

Passionately fond of water-colour drawings, and himself no mean proficient in the art, he attended the studios of some of the most eminent professors with whom he had made acquaintance, began by picking up such smaller and cheaper specimens as came within his present means, and as he obtained merited praise for his discernment, and felt the rage of collecting grow with its indulgence, he was tempted to anticipate what he believed to be an increasing income, and to give his note of hand for a portion of the purchase money of fresh drawings, when he could not conveniently advance the whole. Nor did this strike him as an act of improvidence, since he believed himself to be making a safe investment in buying what he might probably re-sell, should it become necessary, at first cost, if not at an advanced price. To a person of elegant taste the will is a subtle casuist, where its indulgence assumes the form of a commendable zeal for the fine arts; such a man is never more ex-

travagant than when he flatters himself that he is able to carry on a profitable trade, and can actually make money by spending it in articles of *virtù*. *C'est le premier pas qui coûte*. A first purchase for the embellishment of one's rooms, like a first falsehood or a first offence, is very apt to necessitate a hundred others. A handsome new article makes the old ones ugly; they must be replaced by more appropriate successors: nothing is so offensive as a patchy inconsistency. It will generally be found that a love of material and visible order and congruity accompanies the love of moral propriety, for there is more sympathy than we suspect between the eye and the heart. Allan could not bear to see any article out of its place or out of character with its neighbour; even a frame that hung in the smallest degree awry was an eyesore to him; regularity, fitness, and accordance were necessary to his comfort. He soon discovered, therefore, that it was requisite to have a new paper to his rooms, the old one not assorting with his drawings: this was no sooner put

up, than the old carpet became too shabby to be endured ; and when a new one was laid down, its bright hues rendered fresh furniture absolutely indispensable.

Strange as it may sound, the very narrowness of his previous income, and the strict economy of his earlier life, made him less attentive to these expenses than he might otherwise have been ; for the money he had been latterly receiving so much exceeded what he had been accustomed to disburse, that he fancied himself a comparatively rich man, and thought, in his ignorance of London expenses and London tradesmen, that he might indulge his taste without any risk of embarrassment. Perhaps there is no class more subject to assaults upon their purse, in the shape of charitable appeals, than actors, artists, and musical performers ; certainly there is none that responds more liberally to such demands. Allan was soon beset with applications of this nature, and as he was generous, almost to a fault, the only charity he forgot was that which begins at home. To many of the public institutions

also, especially those connected with the fine arts, he became a subscriber, reconciling himself to his increasing expenditure by resolving to ply his pen with an additional activity, and taking it for granted that he could thus procure a certain addition to his ways and means. Among her other accomplishments Isola was a perfect equestrian, and he had often accompanied her in little excursions around the neighbourhood of London; but he was charged so much for the use of a hack, and the insidious logic of making a present outlay to effect an ultimate saving was so conclusive, that he was induced to purchase a horse; and as Isola's was a remarkably handsome animal, it was requisite, of course, to have one that would not disgrace its companion.

An intimacy so close and so long continued gave rise, in the first instance, to all sorts of reports; some of which, being derogatory to the fame of his fair friend, and coming to Allan's ears, had involved him in several unpleasant disputes, though they led to no more serious results than his indignantly

repudiating the acquaintance and silencing the innuendoes of those who presumed to hint a doubt of her unblemished honour. After a little while a close observance of her conduct (and there was no lack of rigorous and jealous eyes to watch her) not only dissipated these injurious surmises, but confirmed a new rumour, originating in her invariably terming Allan her brother, that she was really and truly his sister, married to an Italian, although she had not thought fit—doubtless for good reasons of her own—to produce her husband. As this report would sanction the continuance of their friendship without subjecting either party to scandalous insinuations, Allan gave it a tacit acquiescence, and yielded without reserve to the increasing delight that he experienced from the daily repetition of his visits.

Thus passed several months without producing any material alteration in the position of the principal personages commemorated in these pages, either in the Quadrant or at Woodcote ; and also without throwing a particle of light—without even eliciting

a plausible suggestion that might tend to elucidate the mystery connected with the supposed monk ; with the lunatic lady ; with the corpse that had undergone such an inexplicable process in the unfurnished house in the city ; with the subsequent apparition of Captain Harcourt, although in Quaker's garb, and his embarkation in the neighbourhood of Gravesend. So unmercifully had Allan been ridiculed for his statement of what he had witnessed with his own eyes ; so confidently was it assigned to the effects of a nightmare, or of some spectral illusion ; so unpleasant did he feel it to be looked upon as the victim of deception or credulity, that he had ceased to make reference to the strange tale in the presence of others, or even to attempt a solution of the enigma by further conjectures of his own.

In this lapse of time, however, one change had occurred, one discovery had been made, calculated to produce a marked influence upon the destinies of Allan Latimer, for he had at length found out that he was deeply, passionately in love with Isola. So long as

he could abandon himself to the delights of her society, without the prospect of any immediate interruption—so long as the intoxication of his happiness remained undissipated by any thoughts of their parting—he cared not to analyse his own present feelings, he shrunk from the consideration of the future, lest it should awake him from his beatific trance. It was the enchantress herself who broke the charm, for Isola at this juncture began to proclaim that her mission was approaching its termination—that the sum she had made a solemn vow to raise was nearly accumulated—that she should shortly bid adieu to England—that she should quickly be wafted back to her own happy land; declarations ever made with a more exuberant joy, a more irrepressible rapture, and ever falling upon the ear of her auditor with a more saddening, a more heart-withering shock.

Not until he was overwhelmed with the fear of losing her did he feel that he had already given up to her his whole heart; and this discovery was made at the very

moment when the unbounded ecstasy with which she contemplated her return to Italy, and consequently their eternal separation, painfully proved that her own affections were entirely disengaged, that she could never reciprocate his passion, that she could part from him without one compunctious visiting.

Many were the acts of kindness, the proofs of friendship that he could recall, exclusively of her generous and prompt interference to effect his liberation; manifold and unquestionable were the evidences of the sincere pleasure she had derived from his society; yet in all their innumerable interviews, and upon the countless occasions that might well have elicited her feelings, he could not recall a single look, a single word, an intimation of any sort, that might betoken a warmer sentiment than that of her sisterly regard which she had so openly and so invariably professed. A being so impressionable, with a countenance whose mobility rendered it a dial-plate to the workings of her heart, could never have concealed her emotions.

Quickened as were his own perceptions

and memory by his anxiety to detect some instance of predilection more impassioned than what she might bestow upon a brother, he could not conjure up, out of the records of the past, a solitary betrayal of this nature. No sooner had he discovered his love than he found it to be hopeless, a disclosure which plunged him into an immediate dejection of spirits; and if he shook off his melancholy in the presence of Isola, it only returned with additional force after he had left her.

One morning when he called in the Quadrant he found her busily engaged in packing up the little figure of Psyche, an operation which she would not entrust to any hands but her own. Her exertions had not only given an unusual brilliancy to her complexion, but had dishevelled a portion of her profuse hair, which ever and anon, as she raised her graceful head, she would shake aside with a laughing smile, presenting to the eyes of her admiring lover a more beautiful vision than ever he had imagined, even in his poetic dreams. As her task proceeded she repeatedly kissed the image, bending

over it with looks of impassioned tenderness, and unconsciously assuming attitudes that exhibited in all its beauty the symmetry of her exquisite, her faultless form, while she talked to the inanimate marble with all the dulcet tenderness which her own silver tones could impart to her own mellifluous language. Never, no, never had she appeared, in the eyes now immoveably riveted upon her, half so graceful, so bewitching, so irresistibly fascinating. "This is rather ungentle work for female hands," said Isola, resting herself upon a chair—"but it is a labour of love; so, indeed, is every preparation that announces my return to Italy: no wonder, therefore, that I sing, and rattle, and talk all sorts of nonsense while thus occupied. And yet there is one regret that haunts me in the midst of all my gaiety—yes, there is one drop of bitterness in my cup of joy;—it is the approaching separation from my kind, my accomplished, my good, my pure-minded brother—my Camillo!"

With a beaming and affectionate smile, she held out her hand to Allan, who pressed

it ardently and yet respectfully to his lips. "My speedy departure," resumed Isola, "has not, I hope, produced an equally depressing effect upon you, for I promise you faithfully that I will maintain our friendship unbroken in the form of correspondence; and letters, you know, are quickly transmitted from Naples:—but methinks, Camillo, you have been out of spirits lately; your pale cheeks, too, seem to indicate a return of your former indisposition. For the present I cannot spare you! our remaining hours of social enjoyment together are too few; but as soon as I shall have quitted England, I trust you will resume your steam-boat excursions to Gravesend, or some other place. Have I read your looks aright? Do you really feel unwell?"

"Not so much unwell, as unhappy—miserable," sighed Allan, after a pause.

"Good Heaven! you astonish and grieve me. May I not know the cause of your sorrow?" Allan shook his head despondingly. "You must, you shall admit me to your confidence. Am I not your sister? am

I not about to part from you for ever, and would you have me quit you without knowing the cause of your distress?"

"I dare not—I have not the presumption to reveal it," murmured Allan; "the very fear that you may guess it covers me with confusion, for I am well aware——"

"Nay, then, the information I received from Crevetti, when first we became acquainted, enables me to divine your malady. You are in love—your silence, your agitation, your conscious looks confirm my surmises. And can a man like my own good and gifted Camillo love in vain?—What obstacles oppose themselves to your wishes?"

"Alas! I have been so blind in my infatuation, as hardly to have looked forward, scarcely to have weighed the difficulties, until I had the wretchedness of discovering that they were insuperable."

"Take courage, my brother: what is this impediment which you deem so insurmountable?"

"My own demerits of all sorts—my humble station, my lowly fortune—the pre-

sumption which has led me to bestow my aspiring affections upon one in every respect so immeasurably my superior, that I feel confused, overwhelmed even, in alluding to my folly, rather say my madness."

"Believe me, Oh! believe me, if this be all, you have little ground for misgiving, and none for despair. Love, you know, levels all distinctions; and I will boldly venture to affirm, that even in this aristocratic and money-loving land there are few females worthy of Allan Latimer,—and I am sure he would love none other,—who would not feel themselves flattered as well as honoured by the offer of his hand and heart."

"Say you so? say you so, Isola? Oh! Heaven, what joy, what rapture if it might prove true! But beware, for pity's sake beware how you encourage hopes, which in another moment may be dashed to earth."

"I say it, I repeat it with confidence. Nay, more, if you will confide to me the name of your lofty innamorata, I swear to you, should she be personally known to me, that I will become your advocate, your in-

tercessor, your ambassador, your suitor if you will, and spare you the confession of a love which you are too modest, too humble, too foolishly diffident to prefer in your own person."

"You would be my good genius, my guardian angel—you would raise me from despair to hope,—you would entitle yourself to my eternal gratitude."

"To whom, then, shall I address myself? I will fly to her at once,—I will instantly become her suppliant. You pause—you are agitated, you tremble;—why do you hesitate?"

"Will you swear to forgive me, should you be offended at the presumption of my love?"

"Nonsense! What right have *I* to be offended? But I swear it, nevertheless. Now then—whisper me the name of this paragon of whom you are thus desperately enamoured?"

"Her name—her name," hesitated the lover, as he gasped for breath, and fixed his eyes upon the ground—"is Isola Guardia!"

"Gracious God!" screamed the Italian, clasping her hands vehemently together, and recoiling several paces, with a look of mingled amazement and distress.

"Yes, yes," gasped Allan, with a nervous earnestness, as he followed and seated himself by her side—"yes, dearest Isola! but remember your vow of forgiveness, and allow me to disburthen my bosom of a secret which has at once formed my misery and my delight. I love you, have long loved you, deeply, passionately! Oh! who could associate so much with charms so fascinating, with talents so unrivalled, and not become enamoured? I would offer you my hand, my heart, the devotion of my whole future life, but alas! your words, your looks—yes—I see, I feel, I know that you do not—that you cannot love me in return."

During this speech Isola had sat as if transfixed, her hands still clasped, her eyes riveted to the floor, her mouth partially open, an expression of profound grief upon her features, and thus she remained during a painful silence of some length, when she ex-

claimed with a profound sigh, and in a tone of self-accusing anguish, "Selfish, thoughtless, unfeeling wretch that I am ! I ought to have foreseen the possibility of this, to have guarded against it—and yet who could have anticipated, who could have—Why, Crevetti told me that your affections were engaged—that you were betrothed to a lady at Woodcote, that you came to push your fortune in London, in order that you might be enabled to marry her, which is one reason why I have ever been so anxious to advance your interests, and in this firm belief I encouraged an intimacy which I imagined to be as unobjectionable as I hoped it would prove agreeable to both parties."

"Crevetti was wrong—very wrong ; in his confused apprehension of our language, he must have misunderstood me. I told him—perhaps with a little degree of ambiguity, for it was a subject of some delicacy—that I left Woodcote in order to forget a youthful,—an ill-advised,—an unrequited attachment. Alas ! I fear I have only escaped from one, to plunge into another still more hopeless."

“This has been a cruel mistake on all sides. Oh! that Crevetti had not thus misguided me! Oh! that we had never met! On my soul I believed that you were affianced to another. What an unhappy fate is mine! Many are the insulting propositions that I have received from wretches whom I despised; and now, when an offer of his hand and heart is made to me by a man of honour, by one whose principles I respect, whose conduct towards me has ever been pure, high-minded, and delicate, whom I must always esteem and regard, but whom, alas! I can never——Allan Latimer! I am now a petitioner for *your* forgiveness: if I appear ungrateful, unkind,—if I am compelled to hurt your feelings, to wound your peace of mind—say—for God’s sake say that you pardon me.” In uttering these words, she took his hand, raising it with a gentle pressure between both of hers, and as she looked imploringly upwards in the face of her lover, he perceived that tears were stealing down her cheeks.

“Oh! Heaven!” exclaimed Allan, thrilling

throughout his whole frame ; “ be not thus agitated, thus distressed :—your happiness is ten thousand times dearer to me than my own ; let not my unfortunate passion give you—I cannot—cannot bear to see those tears—never will I again disturb you with the mention of my attachment. I know my fate—I will spare your gentle bosom the pain of rejecting my suit—I know that there is some insurmountable obstacle—I am quite aware, dear Isola, that you cannot command your affections.”

Releasing the hand she had taken, the Italian threw herself back in her chair, pressed her handkerchief to her eyes, sobbed with an almost hysterical vehemence, and then swallowing down her emotion, and assuming a forced composure, exclaimed—“ Insurmountable indeed ! Listen to me, Camillo, my brother,—thank God those endearing titles need never be resigned—listen to me. I have no heart, no affections to bestow, for I am already a wife and a mother—the most fortunate of wives, the happiest of mothers.”

“A wife! a mother!” cried Allan, while his features fell, his heart sank within him, and the perspiration started from his brow.

“Compose yourself, and hear me,” resumed Isola: “you see I am calm, at least much calmer than I was. You have made *your* confession, I must now make mine. No more reserves—they have occasioned misery and mischief enough; it is right that we should fully understand each other. Camillo is my husband!”

“Would that you had termed him so in our first interview, instead of calling him your brother!”

“Pardon me, I said that you were the very image of my Camillo—that I should never be able to call you by any other name. *You* it was who assumed him to be my brother. *You* it was who asked permission to call me sister, to which I gave a ready assent because my marriage was clandestine, and I had reasons for still keeping it secret. Never until now, and to no one but yourself, have I confessed it; but understand me, my friend, my brother—for I would not for

worlds forfeit the smallest portion of your respect—there is nothing improper, nothing dishonourable in my marriage, and if I thought that you were now sufficiently composed to listen——”

“Yes, yes,” interposed Allan, “I am more tranquil already, for where there is no hope there is little perturbation—despair is calm—and anything that relates to you must ever be deeply interesting.”

“My narrative is soon told. My husband, as I have already apprised you, is in personal appearance, as in many other respects, the exact counterpart of yourself. Can you wonder that I loved him?”

“Methinks I can much more easily account for his passionate admiration of Isola.”

“Our attachment was mutual; we were both young; we loved each other with all the ardour of Neapolitans; but I was almost penniless. Camillo was in little better plight, being only an assistant sculptor to his father, who angrily forbade his marrying; promising, however, not only to give his consent to it, but to resign to him the

business of the studio, whenever he should pay over to him, either from his wife's portion or from any other source, the sum of fifteen thousand ducats. Camillo was dispatched, upon business connected with his profession, to my native island of Ischia, where I was then residing with a relation of my deceased father; we were privately married; he found frequent excuses for visiting me, and these interviews became more frequent after the birth of my beautiful boy. Oh! how I wish you could see him! you never beheld so fine a little fellow. But fears and misgivings began to mingle with a felicity too exquisite to be without alloy; suspicions were awakened by the frequent absences of my husband; his father was choleric and avaricious, and we had reason to fear, in the event of a discovery, that he would discard his son, and sell the valuable business to a stranger. In this difficulty I swore that I would devote my talents to purchase my husband's pardon, and secure our joint independence by raising the fifteen thousand ducats. So large a sum might

have appalled others, but I was young, sanguine, and, above all, I was a wife and a mother. Nature had given me a fine voice, which my mother, an opera singer, had carefully cultivated, and which I studied night and day to improve. My husband assented, though not without much difficulty, to my scheme. I accepted a liberal engagement to come to England as a public singer Antonio, an old servant of my father, agreed to accompany me: my success you have seen. I have accomplished my vow, and I am about to return to Italy, to the best husband in the world, and to my dear, my beautiful boy, with more than sufficient means to secure every object which I had solemnly pledged myself to attain. You have sometimes thought me covetous, grasping, mercenary,—nay, shake not your head, I know you have. You can now understand the care and the delight with which I have hoarded up my money. It was for my husband, for my child, for an independent home in my own dear Italy. Young and unprotected as I was, except by my faithful old

Antonio, mine was a perilous undertaking. You know how I have been assailed, what splendid insults have been offered to me. Most thankful am I to Heaven that I have escaped every snare, every temptation, and that never for a single moment have I deviated, either in thought, word, or deed, from the duty that I owed to my husband, to my child, to myself. Do I stand excused in your eyes?"

"Excused! O Isola! I admire, I revere you a thousand times more than ever. I dare not now say that I *love* you, for you are the wife of another; may I not add, however, that you have afforded me abundant excuse for my former passion, at the very moment when I give you my sacred promise never to mention it for the future?"

"It is a vow worthy of yourself, for it is pure and noble."

"But, O Isola! (may I not still call you my *dear* Isola) how difficult will be its observance! I admired your beauty, your talents; and well I might, for both are unrivalled: but your rare virtues were the

winners of my heart ; and alas ! those virtues shine forth the most refulgently when I am condemned to resign you for ever."

"And has *my* heart, think you, no struggle to sustain ? It is throbbing now—will long throb with anguish at the thought of my having given pain—God knows how unintentionally !—to my best, my dearest, my noblest friend. Long will it be before I shall obtain my own pardon : let me—let me hear you say that I have yours."

"Surely, surely, I have more need of it than you."

"Well, then," cried Isola, springing up, kissing him on the cheek, and offering her own to him in return ; "there ; we have exchanged the sacred kiss of reconciliation and forgiveness. Henceforth we are again brother and sister,—friends, ay, and dear friends too, for the remainder of our lives ; but from this moment we must, we must—" her voice faltered, and she was unable to proceed, but presently subduing her emotion, she added in a firmer tone, "we must meet no more."

"No more ! no more !" cried Allan ; " O Isola ! you would not be so cruel. Suffer me, for the few days that you are to remain in England, suffer me to continue my visits, that thus I may conquer my—he reconciled to your loss by degrees."

"What ! would you attempt to smother a flame by gunpowder ? No, my brother, no ; we will deserve each other's respect to the last. The feelings of this moment are too painful to be repeated—you cannot deny it, for the tears are trembling in your eyes ; —you would fain speak, and your accents die away upon your lips. Well then, let the cruel word be first spoken by me. My dear, dear friend, farewell ! farewell for ever. May God preserve and bless you !" She rushed out of the room, and as she hurried up the stairs, gave vent to the loud and passionate sobs which she found it impossible any longer to restrain.

From that moment Allan never saw her more !

CHAPTER VI.

WE return to Woodcote, where, as has already been stated, no material change had occurred during a period of several months among the principal characters introduced to the notice of the reader; although one of our subordinate personages had in that interval experienced a revolution not less signal than beneficial. This was Farmer Chubbs, whose confirmed and continued intemperance had ended in the inevitable fate of drunkards—ill health, ruin, arrest, and imprisonment. Few could present a more striking proof of the enslaving and infatuating influences of this vice, for the old soldier was not only a sensible man, but in every other respect might be termed a good and moral member of

society, while he still retained so strong a sense of honour, and of the value of the badge he had won at Waterloo, that it was carefully and invariably concealed when he felt himself unworthy of its display. Since his incarceration in Gloucester gaol he had kept it in his pocket, where he occasionally twiddled it with his finger and thumb, as he sat apart, ruminating on the lamentable results of his recent career, and the miserable plight of his wife and family, to whom he was tenderly attached; reflections which he had been accustomed to drive away by fresh potations, but which, in the compulsory sobriety of his present situation, clung to him with tenacity, and stung him with the most poignant self-upbraidings.

Thus was he occupied when the gaoler, a humane and enlightened man, informed him that he had permitted a missionary from the Tee-totalers of Sheffield to address the prisoners, and recommended that he should hear what he had to say. From a vague feeling of curiosity, rather than from the least expectation of benefit, the farmer

walked into the press-yard, where he saw a coarse, hard-featured, vulgar-looking, but respectably dressed man, standing on a chair surrounded by a knot of prisoners, most of whom were mocking, mowing, and jibing, while a few seemed disposed to give him serious attention.

“Here comes another on ye,” said the missionary, who spoke in a provincial accent and without any very scrupulous attention to grammatical rules; “you’re another drunkard, ar’n’t ye?” Chubbs, to whom this question was addressed, hung down his head, and made no reply. “Lord love ye! you needn’t give no answer. I can tell a drunkard half a mile off, even when he is sober. I know him by his bloated face, his soddened complexion, his stupid fuddled eye, his shaking limbs, and his tottering walk. *You’re* one, and *you’re* one, and that ugly chap making faces at me is another.”

Little complimentary as was this mode of address, it was well adapted to his auditors, for it raised a laugh, put them in a good humour, and disposed them to listen. “Bless

your tell-tale phizzes, I should rather say your *mugs*," pursued the orator, "I not only knows you when I sees you, but I knows where to find you. First of all I looks for you at booths, beer-houses, gin-shops, and such like; and last of all I looks for you where you're all sure to come to—at work-houses and gaols. That gemman yonder, with the dirty jacket and never a neckcloth, cries out,—Who the deuce are you? Well, I'll tell you who I am, and what I was. Once I was such a notorious dram-drinker,—worse, I'll be bound, than the worst of you—that I was nicknamed Drunken Joe. I was one of the furnace-men in a manufactory at Sheffield, and thought, like all the rest on 'em, that I couldn't do such hot work unless I drank hard; but that's a humbug, as I can prove. Well, becoming a reg'lar drunkard, in course I got in debt, in course I lost my health, in course I lost my work, in course I got into prison—that's always the upshot. Well, Master called on me next day, and he said—Joe, says he, you're a sad drunken fellow, but you're a capital

workman, and, what's more, you've got a scrap or two of good sense in your head. Now, if I was to pay your debts, d'ye think you could take the pledge never to taste no more fermented liquors, except for medical purposes and the offices of religion? I don't like making vows, says I, but I'll promise to try. That'll do, Joe, says he, I know my man;—so he paid the shot, and I got out of quod. Two days arter I was walking down High Street along with my wife, who was precious shabby, in course, when I see Master a-coming atween two ladies. Well, what d'ye think he did? He drops their arms, comes up to me and says, Joe, says he, I must shake hands with you now, for as you have become a sober man you have become a gentleman,—which took such an effect on me, that hang me if I could help crying, and going home directly, and falling upon my knees, and taking the Temperance pledge, which I have faithfully kept ever since." *

* These are facts, stated on the authority of a Temperance missionary from one of our manufacturing towns.

“ And what did you get by it, master Teetotaler ?” demanded one of the prisoners. “ Why, first and foremost, I recovered my health, then I recovered my situation, and as I found that good beefsteaks and water enabled me to do twice the work of the dram-drinkers—for gin’s only a stimulus, not a support—it warn’t long afore I paid all my debts, got my home and my family comfortable, and what d’ye think was the last thing I did afore ever I left home?—why, I gave thirty shillings for a shawl for my wife.”

In this strain he continued for some time longer, informing his auditors that he was paid by small voluntary subscriptions among the workmen for travelling through England to inculcate upon the labouring population the incalculable benefits of Tee-totalism. Nor had they selected a bad advocate ; his own personal history illustrating his doctrine, while his manners, appearance, and even the homely language that proved his humble origin, were perhaps his best recommendations with the congenial class to whom he

was deputed. What influence his oration might produce upon his other auditors we know not, but he had no sooner left the prison than John Chubbs retired to his little room, where he remained for upwards of two hours, pondering deeply and exclusively upon what he had just heard, and wondering whether he could ever summon resolution to imitate the example of Drunken Joe.

By one of those coincidences which sometimes occur in real life, but which are often condemned in novels as improbable, Roger Crab on the same morning paid a visit at the Manor-House, for the purpose of having a chat with its proprietor on the subject of the imprisoned farmer, whose misfortunes formed the prevalent topic of conversation in the neighbourhood. "Ah! Captain Molloy, are you here?" said the old gentleman as he entered the parlour; "nay, don't move—don't let me send you away. Strange as it may sound, I had rather you would stay a little longer, for I want to consult with our friend Mr. Brown how to get a foolish,

dissipated fellow out of trouble, and perhaps your long experience in such matters—”

“Faith and troth, you may say that. What I have done in extricating fellows out of their difficulties is quite incredible.”

“That I believe,” said Crab, looking at the ceiling and counting the tips of his fingers.

“Yes ; I have always made it a point to assist honest fellows as much as I could.”

“You could not possibly lay down a more disinterested rule. Yours is not the charity, I see, that begins at home. Well, neighbour Brown, what’s to become of this drunken, good-for-nothing fellow, John Chubbs?”

“Zooks! Sir, what’s to become of the rent he owes me? that’s the question. As to the drunkard himself, let him rot in prison.”

“Surely that were a pity ; for the fellow, with all his faults, has good metal in him.”

“Yes,” cried the Captain, “but with a precious lot of alloy.”

“*Molloy!*” ejaculated Crab emphatically.

“Did you call me?” demanded the Captain.

“No; I was thinking of Chubbs’s character. He has but one vice, and he has paid dearly for it, Heaven knows; so have his poor wife and family, and they have committed no offence. I have bought his old horse Wellington, though he is of little use to any one, because I know he loves the beast, and would not have him fall into the hands of strangers. I have also requested his wife and daughters to come up and stay with us for the present at Monkwell, for we wanted some jobs done in which they can assist us; and if I were his landlord and a rich man, like Mr. Brown, I know what I would do next.”

“Ah! everybody ready to give advice, if they won’t give you anything else; and pray what *would* you do next?”

“I would pay the debt for which he is arrested, which is of small amount—give him back the stock and furniture on which you have already levied an execution, and try whether that unexpected and unmerited act of generosity might not effect a salutary change in his character. I have heard of such things.”

“The devil you have! I never did; and I’m not going to be such an ass, and a gull, and a goose, and a gudgeon, as to try the experiment. What! reward him for being a drunkard! Pay away hard money to retain such a tenant as that! Not I. No; he has made his own bed, and I shall let him lie in it, however hard it may be. Ha, ha! had him there!”

Crab, after expressing his regret at this determination, took his leave, when Molloy fell foul of him for the foolish advice he had given, and declared that Brown would be the laughing-stock of the whole county if he followed it. The kind-hearted merchant had all along been yearning to adopt Crab’s suggestions; but if there was one thing he hated more than another, it was the appearance of taking advice, of acting upon the recommendation of others, of receiving dictation, instead of following the impulses of his own free will. His was a wayward spirit, that had rather lead in a wrong direction than follow in a right one, and Molloy’s opposition afforded him an oppor-

tunity of gratifying this propensity, as well as the secret wishes of his own heart.

“Laughing-stock of the whole county!” he ejaculated, working himself into a passion, as he walked rapidly up and down, by the vehement thumpings of his cane: “What care I for the whole county? Curse the whole county! don’t owe a farthing to a single man Jack of ’em. Suppose I may do as I like, without their leave. Wish the whole county was in this room—ring its nose, to let it see how much I care for it. Impudent fellow, that Molloy, to fancy I should take *his* advice. Hang me if I don’t drive over to Gloucester and liberate John Chubbs this very day. The Captain shall soon see that I’m not a fellow to be led by the nose.”

So saying he rang the bell sharply, exclaiming, when the servant made his appearance—“John! I’m going to make a great ass of myself.” Trotman bowed assentingly. “You must go immediately to Monkwell—needn’t ask for Mr. Crab—but get Mrs. Chubbs and her family over as quick as you

can to Four-oak Farm, and see and make the place a bit comfortable and tidy, for I'm going to drive over to Gloucester gaol to take Farmer Chubbs out of prison." That he might not lose a moment in executing so pleasant a commission, John walked rapidly towards the door, but, taciturn as he was, he could not avoid turning round, and blurted out, while his eyes glistened, the words "God bless you, Sir!"—In an incredible short space of time his message was delivered at Monkwell, and to Crab himself, who ran to the gate imagining, from the rapidity of Trotman's approach, that some accident must have happened.

"I thought so, John," was his remark as soon as he learnt the nature of his errand; "I knew he would do it, but I didn't like to press him, for I find he would rather walk out of his road than be led into it. How lucky I bought old Wellington and the market-cart! I shall give them back to the farmer, for they're no use to me, and you shall drive them over."

Half an hour had hardly elapsed when

Mrs. Chubbs and her family were seated in the vehicle, which was furnished with refreshments of all sorts, by order of the little old-fashioned lady of Monkwell, who directed her little old-fashioned maid to draw her wheel-chair into the garden, where she put on her spectacles that she might have the better view of the party as they set off, and continued smiling and twiddling her thumbs complacently as long as the cart remained in sight. The young folks laughed and ate cakes all the way, their mother laughed and cried all the way; Trotman complaining of the dust, though there was none, repeatedly wiped his eye with the sleeve of his coat; and old Wellington, as they drew near to Four-oak Farm, pointed his ears, snuffed up the air with a triumphant neigh, and mended his pace into such a sharp trot, that they were presently reinstated in their home, and all as busy as bees in preparing for the expected return of its master.

Adam Brown, in the mean while, drove over to Gloucester gaol, where, after rating

the farmer soundly for his deplorable drunkenness, upbraiding him with his unpaid rent, and making the stone floor echo to the angry remonstrances of his cane, he told him that, for the sake of giving him one more chance in life, he came to liberate him from prison, and re-establish him in his farm. Chubbs, like many other men, though free from all superstition as to heavenly interferences in the affairs of others, was not quite so sceptical as to his own claims to divine favour. It is so flattering to be singled out for a special providence, that we easily lend ourselves to the delusion; no wonder, therefore, that the prisoner, coupling his own fate and unexpected deliverance with the similar tale which he had heard that very morning from the lips of Drunken Joe, should imagine there was something supernatural in the whole affair, and sink into a bewilderment compounded of awe and wonder. He was not easily excited, nor was he a man to make protestations and vows. Not a word did he utter on his way home; his thoughts

were too busy ;—but when, on reaching the farm, he was saluted with a scream of irrepressible joy from his wife ; when his dear children contended who should first embrace him ; when, upon being led to the stable, Wellington instantly recognised him by a loud and joyful whinny, he turned round, fell upon the neck of his wife, and imprecated a curse upon his head if he should ever again taste any intoxicating liquor. Truth forbids us to state that this oath was taken in the exact words of the Temperance pledge. If, as we fear, it was uttered in the irreverent phraseology of an old soldier, we have only to express our hope that “the recording angel, as he wrote it down, let fall a tear upon the word, and blotted it out for ever.” If not religiously taken, at all events it was religiously kept : and Oh ! what a speedy, what a blessed change did it effect !

In two months the bells of Woodcote Church, ringing a merry peal that set every heart a-dancing, announced the marriage of Harry Groombridge and Fanny, who settled

in a pretty cottage at the distance of a few hundred yards from the mill. If the sun ever quickened his pace, he would surely have been sometimes tempted to rise before his time, that he might catch a glimpse of Fanny's happy face as she went forth at early dawn to milk her cow, or that he might listen to the bird-like carol that attested the overflowing blitheness of her heart. Farmer Chubbs himself, as well as his wife and family, was again well dressed; the Waterloo medal was once more displayed as he walked at their head to church; the farm in a very few months would hardly have been recognised for the same; and small, though regular, instalments had been paid to Brown in reduction of his debt. Chubbs was the cause, however, of more happiness to others than he himself enjoyed, for his health had been injured by his previous habits of intemperance, he felt himself to be an old man, and when he contrasted the profits and the comfort of his present course, with the many precious years wasted in drunken dissipation, his mind became em-

bittered with self-upbraidings and regrets, which, though he knew them to be vain, he found it impossible to repel.

Brown was sitting one morning in his parlour, complacently entering in his ledger the sixth of these monthly instalments, and exulting with no small pride in the success of his generous experiment, although it had partly originated in a spirit of perverse opposition, when a double letter was put into his hands bearing the London postmark. "Hallo!" he exclaimed, scrutinising the address, his invariable practice before he broke the seal; "this looks like Simon's writing! Surely the fellow wouldn't have the impudence! Think to cheat me again? No, no,—once bit, twice shy. It can't be from him;" and he turned it repeatedly round, as if he could divine its contents by the exterior; not succeeding in which, he at length broke it open, and read the following contents indited in a remarkably fair, legible, clerk-like hand:—

“92, *Great St. Helen's, City, London.*

“MY DEAR UNCLE,

“MOST humbly do I beseech you to excuse the liberty I take in thus addressing you, for I am aware that I have deservedly forfeited your good opinion; but as my respect and dutiful affection towards you remain undiminished, my feelings would not allow me to commence my letter in any other way. Let me begin by solemnly assuring you that when I placed the security in your hands upon which you so kindly advanced me the £750, I firmly believed it to be as good as the Bank of England: I was dreadfully shocked when I found Hay and Simpkinson had absconded, leaving no assets behind them. It has rendered me truly miserable that I could not sooner repay the debt I owe you, although I made all sorts of efforts to do so. Fortune, I am most thankful to say, has at length crowned my exertions with success; so far at least, that I remit you enclosed, drawn to your own order, a bill upon the Gloucester bank for the sum you lent me, with the addition of

interest and compound interest to the day the bill falls due, as per statement at foot, which closes that transaction to a point.

“This payment leaves me little or nothing for my future struggles with the world; but to that I am indifferent. From the late connections I have formed in business, which are of the highest respectability, I shall always be able to maintain myself; and now that I have discharged this debt, which has always weighed heavily upon my mind, and, I hope, recovered your good opinion thereby, I shall set to work with fresh spirits. Since I last saw you I have been to Smyrna, not knowing that you had left it, where I met some of your friends, all of whom spoke of you in the highest terms. I have met with several other adventures, which I think you would like to hear. If you would kindly allow me to see you for a single day at the Manor-House, I think I could state many circumstances which might induce you to overlook my past errors, to believe that I am an altered, and, I trust, a better man, and perhaps recover for me the

good opinion which I have so unfortunately, though so deservedly forfeited. Awaiting your reply with the greatest anxiety, I am,

“My dear Uncle,

“Your dutiful and affectionate Nephew,

“SIMON HOLMES.”

Unable to trust the evidence of his senses, and to believe in the good luck of thus unexpectedly recovering his £750, with interest, the merchant instantly examined the enclosed bill of exchange, which he vehemently suspected to be a forgery. “It looks like a genuine bill,” he exclaimed, holding it up to the window, “but the fellow’s such a confounded scamp, such a liar, played me such a rascally trick before, that—don’t see what he’s to get, though, by sending me a sham Abraham—drawn after date, I see—only seven days to run, including the three days’ grace—not worth a farthing, though, till it’s accepted. Soon settle that question. Hallo, John Trotman! order the carriage immediately—I’ll go over to Gloucester myself.” During the drive he repeatedly

re-perused the letter, always detecting in it some new proofs of hypocrisy, duplicity, and design, though he could not discover any immediate object for their employment; and still cherishing a latent suspicion that the whole epistle might be a hoax and its enclosure a forgery. Great, therefore, was his delight when, on reaching the banking house, the partners in which were men of known wealth, they not only assured him that it was a good and valid bill, of which they had received regular advice, but offered to pay him the amount at once in any way he might think fit—a proposition which he immediately accepted, as if to convince himself that he held a valid security. On again conning over the letter as he drove back, with the money securely lodged in his pocket-book, its tenor seemed to have undergone a marvellous transformation, and to present, in almost every line, intrinsic proofs that the writer was really what he represented himself, a changed and amended character, whom it might be well to encourage in a new and more honourable career.

Curious are the links by which human affairs are sometimes unexpectedly chained together, singular the effects that occasionally spring from causes with which they would appear to have little or no affinity. Had not Captain Molloy, in a casual call at the Manor-House, endeavoured to dissuade Brown from liberating Chubbs, he might have been still incarcerated; had not the farmer turned out a reformed character, Brown would never have acceded to his nephew's request and have allowed him to come to Woodcote. Arguing, from the success of his recent experiment, that a similar extension of favour to Simon Holmes might be attended with results equally gratifying, he wrote to him, although in very guarded terms, granting him permission to come and stay at Woodcote for a couple of days. Exclusively of the paramount and reconciling *douceur* contained in his nephew's letter, it was cunningly worded for the attainment of his object, his uncle's curiosity being piqued to learn the nature of the adventures to which the writer

alluded, as well as to gather some tidings of his old mercantile friends at Smyrna, and of their proceedings since he had left them.

Cold and cautious as was the merchant's permission, no time was lost in its acceptance, for on the evening of the second day Simon Holmes descended from the top of the stage, that passed the gates of the Manor-House, carrying a small valise, which he deposited in the hall, when he was ushered by Trotman into the presence of his uncle, at sight of whom he was so much abashed, that he could neither raise his eyes from the ground nor advance to salute him. "Don't wonder you're confused and dumbfounded," cried Brown; "thought you'd be afraid to look me in the face—glad to see you've grace enough to be ashamed of yourself. A precious game you've been playing, and a pretty fool you have been making of yourself, haven't you?"

"I have, I have indeed," sighed the nephew, clasping his hands together; "no one can be more conscious of it, more grieved

for it than myself; but I trust, my dear uncle, that as you will have no future cause of complaint against me, I may in time recover your good opinion."

"Recover! don't know that you ever had it—not for many years past, at all events—how d'ye like that?"

"Alas! it is no more than I deserve. Most humbly do I thank you for your kindness in acceding to my request; but as you granted me permission to pay you a short visit, I hope you will spare me all further reproaches. I throw myself, dear uncle, on your mercy. You who have gone through life so honourably, so uprightly, so successfully, ought not to bear hard upon those who, not having your strength of mind or firmness of principle, have, unfortunately, yielded to temptation."

"Well, Sir, well," replied the uncle, a good deal mollified by this appeal, "if you've really and truly sowed your wild oats, and mean to become an honest man and a steady character, I won't say anything about the past. Threw away a good

chance, Sir, when you quitted my counting-house, I can tell you that. Look at me, Sir,—left Woodcote with seven and ninepence in my pocket;—rather more now, I suspect. Ha! ha!”

“Ah! had I followed your advice and your example, what a different fate would mine have been!”

“You may say that,—time enough yet—never too late to mend; but why do you stand there? Come and sit down by my side. Zooks, Sir! since you have lost the curls from your forehead, and obtained a crop of whiskers, you have become very like your poor father. Ah! it was a pity he died when you were so young.”

“It was, indeed! but my mother was a far sadder loss. Had she been living I should never have gone astray. She was, indeed, the best of mothers.”

“Ay, and of sisters too. Poor Mary! I was very fond of her. Methinks, Simon, you have got a look of her too. Don’t find you much altered though, except that you appear a deal older; but it is a good many

years now since we met, and time soon runs up a score upon a fellow's face."

"Yes, Sir, and troubles and sorrows write down compound interest for every year that passes. Did you find my statement of the amount between us correct? The interest came to a much larger sum than I had anticipated."

"Yes, Simon, yes; it was drawn out in a very business-like manner,—does you great credit;—and I am glad to see that your handwriting is as good as ever."

"It was the happiest moment of my life, Sir, when I had scraped together money enough to make you that remittance, although it left me only a few sovereigns in my pocket."

These last words fell rather harshly upon the merchant's ear; his suspicions were quickly roused, and his searching eye was fixed upon his nephew as he exclaimed, "So! the murder's out, is it?—The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be,—got nothing left—don't know what to be at, so the sinner turns saint and wishes to be

reconciled to his uncle, to see what he may get out of him. Is that it? Come, tell truth and shame the devil, and let me know at once what you expect me to do for you?"

"Nay, Sir, I expect you to grant me nothing but justice, and that, I am sure, you will not refuse me. Recollect that if I am left almost pennyless, I have the more merit in remitting the large amount which I have just paid you."

"Well, Simon, that's true, I must confess."

"Nor do I come to claim anything at your hands, except forgiveness and reconciliation. From the respectability of the mercantile connections I have formed, as mentioned to you in my letter, I have secured the means of maintenance."

"Ah, that's right, that's right, nothing like independence. I hope you'll never borrow again. For my part I have made up my mind never to lend any more money. Only prevents people from making proper exertions; does them more harm than good."

"I quite agree with you, Sir. In fact

I have nearly concluded an agreement to go out to South America as supercargo, and as that climate is unhealthy, and life always uncertain, it has been my great object to discharge my debt and to recover your good opinion before I took my departure from Europe."

"Very proper, Simon, very proper—glad to hear you talk in this way; looks as if you really meant to become a useful member of society, and to make a fortune at last, as I have done."

"Ah! Sir, it is not every one who possesses your surprising talents for business; everybody said at Smyrna that you were by far the most enlightened as well as the most successful merchant they had ever known."

"Yet there are some clever fellows at Smyrna, Simon, very clever fellows."

"Yes, Sir, and they show it by their opinion of you."

"Oh! that's all flummery, which is a thing I particularly dislike," said the merchant; but neither his looks nor his real

feelings bore out the assertion on the present occasion, for he was proud of his mercantile abilities, and tickled by this compliment from his old rivals at Smyrna, respecting whom he put numerous questions to his visitant, and became so much interested in his statements, that he remained complacently chatting with him until supper-time, becoming every minute more disposed to overlook his past misconduct in consideration of the wonderful improvement which time, knowledge of the world, and some experience of its painful vicissitudes had evidently wrought in his character.

Wild and unguarded as he might have been in his younger days, the present deportment and conversation of Simon Holmes indicated a man of steady habits, and of moral and religious sentiments; his opinions were always advanced with great humility and diffidence; his manner was deferential—some thought it sly and sneaking; the expression of his countenance was subdued and rather melancholy, as if he felt that his past errors gave him but little right to as-

sume a more confident bearing, and that he ought to be grateful for receiving notice from any quarter ; his pale complexion betrayed tokens of past dissipation ; he had a watchful, restless, timorous eye ; he started and was thrown into manifest agitation by any sudden noise ; but as his figure was good, his appearance genteel, his voice soft and insinuating, he could not be considered altogether as an unprepossessing person.

CHAPTER VII.

BROWN was up and stirring at an early hour on the following morning ; the tedium and inoccupation of his latter life rendered the arrival of his nephew an event of so much excitement, that it had even abridged his usual allowance of sleep, and his impatient temperament made him eager to renew the conversation from which he had derived so much pleasure on the previous night. Not that he expected his visitant, wearied, in all probability, by the fatigues of his journey, to be "stirring with the lark," like himself; but as he wished to show him his improvements in the house and grounds, he resolved to walk round his domain first, to see that everything was in

the best order. When beautifiers of mansions have exhausted the admiration of the neighbourhood, huge is their delight in showing the lions to a new victim, whose praises are ever welcome as the only interest they are likely to receive for their outlay. To the equal surprise and delight of the merchant he found, on entering his little parlour, that his nephew was already up and busily engaged with a book. "What, Simon, my boy!" he exclaimed, unconsciously resuming the familiarity of former years, "who would have expected to find you up as soon as the sun?"

"I have always been an early riser, Sir; your precept, as well as your example, gave me a habit of it in early days. Ah! what blessing would it have been had I followed them in other and more important respects!"

"Well, well, Simon, too late to think of that now; we must look forwards, not backward. Busy already! what are you reading?"

"My favourite book, Sir, since I have

studied to amend my life,—Blair's Sermons. I like them because, as they contain no controversial divinity, they are equally adapted to readers of every class. Anxious to guide us all towards heaven, he does not tell us that we have no chance of reaching it unless we travel in his own private and particular conveyance, nor does he denounce and anathematize us if we adopt another."

"And a sensible fellow, too. Christianity means love, not hatred."

"Very true, Sir, strikingly true. Those few words contain the very pith and marrow of theology. Are you not inclined to agree with Sir William Temple, that all those controversies which can never end, had much better never begin?"

"To be sure I am, though I never heard of Sir William. Remember a firm of Higginbotham and Temple, drysalters in Great Eastcheap—some idea they failed—kept cash at our banker's. Well, Simon, as you've read a sermon, which is all the same as saying your prayers, and the sun is shining cheerily, what say you to a walk

round the grounds before breakfast?—give you an appetite—hey?”

“Nothing I should enjoy more; I am particularly fond of a walk before breakfast, and I am all curiosity to see the house and grounds. It seems to be a most charming place.” Everything that he saw in their ramble inspired the visitant with fresh admiration and delight, his especial ecstasy being reserved for the alterations and additions effected by his uncle, which he pronounced to be so manifest, as well as admirable, that he only wondered how they should have escaped the notice of former occupants. “And yet, dear uncle,” he continued, but immediately checked himself, adding, after a short pause, and in a tone of humble apology, “I beg your pardon, Sir, for addressing you with so much familiarity—the phrase slipped from me inadvertently, I was thinking of former and happier days. I have no right thus to address you, for though my affectionate feelings might justify it, my conduct has been so reckless, so disreputable, so abominable——”

“Well, well, boy! can’t be helped now—told you so before. What were you going to say?”

“I was about to express my surprise, Sir, that you, whose whole life has been devoted to mercantile pursuits, should evince such a marked taste in laying out grounds and embellishing a mansion.”

The merchant, whose weak point had been quickly discovered by his nephew, and whose alterations of the Manor-House displayed a noble disdain of architectural consistency, shared the common infirmity of being gratified with compliments in the inverse ratio of his deserving them; but as he would not be too vain of his demerits, he meekly replied—“Why, I must confess, Simon, that I rather pique myself upon my improvements of the old house; but, after all, what *is* good taste but good sense, knowing how to set about things, and to succeed in them? If a fellow can leave Woodcote with seven and nine-pence in his pocket, and come back with a fine fortune, I should like to know what he *cannot* do.”

“Very true, Sir, a very just and a very striking observation.”

“You talk of a man being a clever fellow because he makes a fine palace, or a fine picture, or writes a fine book, but the cleverest fellow for my money is the man who makes a fine fortune. Ha ! ha ! What say you to that ?”

“No doubt, Sir, no doubt—the talent that doesn’t enrich itself, isn’t worth having.”

“Better give up yours, then, Simon, if you’ve got any—had you there—how d’ye like it ?”

“Ah ! Sir,” replied the nephew with a deep sigh—“you should recollect—allow me to say so once more—you should recollect how few are gifted with your own rare abilities ; but I hope to improve : at all events, I have made money enough to get out of your debt, which is a good beginning.”

“So it is, boy, so it is—didn’t mean to hurt your feelings—dare say you’ll be a rich man one of these days,” said the merchant, mollified by the last remark. “Well, shall we turn in and see whether breakfast’s

ready ? Famous thing for an appetite an early walk like this."

After having taken his visitant over the interior of the house, and again round the grounds, upon the plea that they looked very different when the sun was in the meridian and there were fewer shadows, the merchant became anxious to show him some of the remarkable places in the neighbourhood. Latterly he had hardly ever used the one-horse chaise, he himself not choosing to drive, the coachman being too deaf for a companion, Trotman too silent, and Walter Latimer seldom obtainable, as the hours which he could spare from attendance upon his mother were mostly devoted to Ellen Molloy.

Simon Holmes was a good whip; they took a long and pleasant drive, and on their return he was again put in requisition for anecdotes and information respecting Smyrna, the casino where the smokers and billiard-players used to assemble, the merchants and their families, the state of trade, the alteration in the entrance to the noble harbour, and other points; upon all of which he con-

versed so readily and so intelligently, that his uncle, who had latterly been suffering from a depression of spirits, mainly occasioned by a want of society and occupation, was so much charmed with his conversational powers as hardly to leave him for a single minute. A reference to the billiard-table at Smyrna suggested a game at the Manor-House. Holmes, who was a perfect master of his cue, in every sense of the word, provoked his adversary by beating him at the beginning of the game, and then suffered him unexpectedly to win—a result which converted his previous mortification into a jubilant delight and cackling triumph.

“I cannot understand it,” exclaimed the nephew, assuming in his turn an air of great vexation—“I used to be deemed a capital player. You must have practised all day long.”

“Not I, boy—not I—hardly ever play. Come, let’s have another game, and I’ll give you two.” The merchant was still a winner—he gave him four, with the same result; declaring, when they left off, that his adversary was a capital player, that he should be happy

to offer him his revenge next day. Holmes played chess, and backgammon, and cribbage, and all sorts of dual games ; he read the Public Ledger newspaper aloud, commenting upon the mercantile intelligence, and the prices of stocks, and the sales by auction, with the acuteness of one who evidently understood what he was discussing ; and when these resources failed, he crept into his uncle's heart of hearts by accompanying him to the house-top, where they would sit together for hours, enjoying the unsociable sociality of smoking. In short, he kept Brown so constantly employed and amused, that at the expiration of the two days, which seemed to have flitted away with an unaccountable rapidity, he would not listen when he hinted that the term for which he had been invited had expired, and that he was prepared, however reluctantly, to take his departure.

" Pooh, pooh, nonsense !" was the reply. " No hurry, boy—very well as you are :—make it a week—make it a week—hardly spoken to you yet—hate fellows to be all hurry skurry, splash dash. Shan't let you

go ; that's one word for all." With many expressions of humble gratitude the nephew signified his acquiescence in this mandate, devoting himself so successfully, during the remainder of the term, to the great object of ingratiating himself with his uncle, that the latter vehemently insisted upon his extending his visit to a month. Knowing from former experience that opposition and difficulty only increased the merchant's eagerness and obstinacy, the wily visitant now made various objections to the proposal, urging his conditional engagement to go out to South America as a supercargo—as well as the flattering prospects that would be thus opened to him of forming the most advantageous connections, and redeeming the time he had lost ; always testifying fresh gratitude, and expressing the most profound regret that this sense of duty would not allow him to obey the ardent dictates of his heart by remaining at the Manor-House. Throwing cold water upon the proposition, like a similar process upon unslaked lime, only made Brown fume up with a new heat, and gave

additional stringency to his resolves—a result which had been clearly foreseen.

At his uncle's request, or rather, by his positive command, Holmes gave up the contemplated supercargoship, profitable as it must have proved according to his own assertions, and thus established something like a claim for his future provision, or the procurement of an equally advantageous appointment. This was a plea that he found no occasion to urge; it was anticipated by the merchant, who, whenever he talked of taking his departure and no longer obtruding upon his kindness and hospitality, checked him by exclaiming—"Nonsense, my dear Simon, nonsense. As I made you give up your engagement, you must stay here—nay, you *shall*—till I can find something else equally good—not going to fob you off in that way—not the fellow to do a shabby thing." With the most ardent acknowledgments, mingled with a coy reluctancy, and allusions to the fine opening which South America would have presented to him, and fears that he was wearing out his wel-

come, and abusing his dear uncle's generous hospitality, did Holmes obey these welcome orders, omitting no art of cozenage, flattery, or ingratiating that might obtain for him a permanent settlement in the Manor-House by cajoling its proprietor. Nor was he less solicitous to insinuate himself in other directions, and to win "golden opinions from all sorts of people," an object in which he was well qualified to succeed by his general intelligence, as well as by his subdued, quiet, and deferential manner. With Mr. Penfold, the clergyman, he soon became a special favourite, being not only a regular attendant at morning and evening service, but being frequently encountered in the field immediately adjoining the parsonage with a volume of Blair's Sermons in his hand, upon which occasions he never failed to declare how much he had been delighted, and, he did humbly trust, benefited too by the admirable sermon he had heard last Sunday.

Smooth and successful as had hitherto been his career at Woodcote, an event occurred one morning which for a moment

threatened to subvert all his manœuvres and machinations. Just as he was preparing to go out and join his uncle in the grounds, he was informed by Trotman that a lady wished to speak with him, who declined giving her name, or coming up stairs. "A lady! with me!" he exclaimed, while the colour rushed to his pale face, and his restless eye glanced suspiciously round the room—"Who is she? what is she like?"

"A stranger—what she shouldn't be," was the laconic reply to both questions. Holmes hurried immediately down stairs, waiting, however, until the servant had disappeared before he opened the dining-room door, which he carefully closed when he had entered, exclaiming in a voice of suppressed rage, to a woman whose brazen looks and vulgar finery abundantly justified Trotman's description, "*You* here! Curse your impudence! how dare you ferret me out and follow me in this manner?"

"Curse *you*!" replied the woman, "for a pitiful, sneaking rascal as you are, and

always have been. Do you mean to desert me and fob me off in this manner?"

"Fob you off! Have I not made you rich? have I not given you more than your fair share of the plunder, and did you not promise me to return to Scotland?"

"Ay, you gull, but I didn't say when. The money's all gone, and I must have more."

"I have none to give you, and if I had I wouldn't fork out another pound."

"You won't! then by—I'll blow the gaff upon you—peach—pull you up and spoil your sport, whatever it may be. What! do you forget, my fine fellow, that you are in my power; that I can transport you—ay, and it's my belief, can hang you if I choose!"

"Hush, hush! don't speak so loud, for Heaven's sake; you may be overheard."

"Oho!" laughed the woman, with a look of malignant triumph; "you are afraid of what I say here, are you? I'll give you a devilish deal more to be afraid of, if I bring you into a court of justice!"

“Let me tell you once more, Margaret, as I have already told you a thousand times, that you are in my power, not I in yours. *I* have never committed forgery—*I* have never been guilty of perjury and fraud—*I* have never——”

“Who did I do it for, you skulking sneaker!” interposed the woman; “Who put me up to it? who got the plunder, but yourself?”

“Only a part; only a small part. I had many others to pay besides you, and your haul was no trifle, whatever you may have done with it.”

“That’s no odds—I must have more—I want twenty pounds directly, and twenty pounds I’ll have before ever I quit this house. I may be in your power *now*, but what if I turn king’s evidence?”

“You’re not such a fool, Margaret! You’ll only ruin yourself; you can’t bring any thing home to me; I’ve been too cunning for you. But if I give you this twenty pounds, will you swear to return to Scotland within a week?”

“Ay, ay! I swear it, for I believe I had better get out of the way. Out with the flimsies or the shiners, I don’t care which, and I’ll be off in a jiffey.” Drawing a small case from his fob, he took out a twenty-pound note, which his unwelcome visitant, after holding it up to the window, and minutely examining, thrust into her pocket, while her companion whispered in her ear, “Remember what you have just sworn, and remember also that you are in my power!”

“Gammon! King’s evidence!” was the sneering reply when she quitted the room, followed, until she had left the gates, by the fixed and terrified eye of her accomplice, upon whom the effects of this alarming interview were painfully manifest: a paleness more than usually wan and ashy had succeeded to the momentary redness that had overspread his features; the perspiration stood upon his forehead, and his limbs shook with involuntary twitches: but he calmed himself after a short delay, and proceeding to his uncle in the grounds, said with a forced composure, “I have just had an

unexpected visit from the wife of an old acquaintance, who is most anxious to obtain the valuable supercargoship which I have resigned, and I have promised to use my influence in his favour. He has been a sad wild fellow, and his wife, I fear, was a woman of doubtful character; but Heaven knows, an offender like myself has little right to sit in judgment upon others. He is reformed now, and I shall be happy if I can procure him so excellent an appointment."

"All right, Simon, all right. Those who have glass windows mustn't throw stones. Never too late to mend, as *you* can prove. Your feelings do you credit. This long stroll has given me an appetite. Come, shall we turn in and take luncheon?" Just as they were commencing their repast, the merchant suddenly exclaimed, while he gazed from the window, "Zooks! who's this, I wonder, staring through the gates? Not going to come in, is she? What an overdressed, bold-looking hussy!" Startled and alarmed, his companion jumped from his chair, and beheld the female from whom he

had so recently parted, gazing at the house as if she meant to return—a sight which sent him trembling back to his seat, where he attempted to proceed hastily with his meal, although his nervous agitation rendered him evidently unconscious of his own actions.

“Hallo, boy! what the deuce are you at?” demanded his uncle; “you’re pouring vinegar over the cold apple-pie; and now you’re putting mustard into your wine!”

“Am I?” said Holmes, peppering the salt-cellar with much eagerness; “I was thinking——”

“Call this thinking? Don’t look a bit like it. Oh! that strange creature has gone away—not coming in, I see. But, Simon, what on earth has sent your wits a wool-gathering in this way?”

“My thoughts have indeed been wandering,” replied the nephew, somewhat reassured by the departure of that fearful woman; “the person whom you saw at the gate was the wife of my unfortunate friend, the party of whom I have just been speaking, and I was completely overcome by the

thought that so gifted and so good a fellow, though he has been a sad rake, should be tied for life to such a disreputable, low-lived companion."

"Poor fellow! bad job, certainly; but don't see, master Simon, why you should spoil my nice apple-pie for all that. Take vinegar with your own, if you like; no accounting for tastes, but I prefer sugar."

Although by this ready invention Holmes had adroitly managed to avoid all immediate suspicion, the visit, haunting him with a thousand vague apprehensions, made him doubly anxious for the speedy accomplishment of his designs.

Well aware that constant occupation was the great desideratum for the active mind of his uncle, he not only took care to supply him with the various resources and amusements to which allusion has already been made, but prevailed upon him to commence farming on a small scale, a pursuit which immediately recommended itself to his favour, by recalling his old habits of traffic, as well as by its promise (but not its reali-

sation) of eventual profit. He made bargains in cattle and horses; he was out early in the morning looking after his stock and his labourers; at night he was busily engaged in posting up the new accounts he had opened in his ledger; the result of which personal and mental activity was a speedy restoration of the health and spirits, which had been suffering from stagnation. His improvement in these respects was attributed to the magical presence of his nephew, and in proportion as he believed himself to have been benefited as well as delighted by his society, was he reluctant to contemplate his departure. He cast his views forward: he was an old man, subject to asthmatic attacks; he wanted a companion for his declining years;—he had quarrelled with Allan Latimer and his brother;—there was at present no claimant for the fine fortune which he had so laboriously built up—to whom ought he, to whom could he leave it, unless to his only near relative—the only child of his only sister? He was of an impetuous tempera-

ment, and hated long deliberations, so that after perpending these matters in his mind for a little while, he announced to Holmes himself, and to their friends in the neighbourhood, his intention of making him his sole heir, provided he took the name of Brown, resided always at the Manor-House, and continued to conduct himself with the undeviating propriety that had marked his recent life.

Great and immediate was the sensation excited in Woodcote and throughout its vicinity by this declaration; a fact of which no one was rendered more pointedly cognizant than the heir himself, who was now saluted with cap-in-hand reverence by the rustics as "the young Squire," while those of a better grade assumed a much more smiling and deferential manner when they encountered him. Nay, several families who had hitherto kept aloof from calling at the Manor-House, especially those where there were managing mammas, now sought occasion for doing so, justly observing that to visit a vulgar old merchant was a differ-

ent, a very different thing from making acquaintance with such an accomplished and gentlemanly young man as Mr. Holmes. The object of these sudden advances saw and perfectly well understood their meaning, but it altered not his deportment: he was still meek, humble, demure as ever; ingratiating himself even with those whose interests were the most likely to be compromised by his unexpected appearance at Woodcote.

“It seems as if all my hopes in this world were destined to be frustrated,” said Mrs. Latimer with a sigh, as she plied her needle, while Walter sat drawing by her side. “And yet I am very wicked and ungrateful to say so,” she added after a moment’s pause, “for I’m sure I have more blessings than most people, more, I fear, than I deserve, with all the comforts of life about me, and two such sons as I do verily believe no mother ever had before.” Her fingers ceased their motion, and her eyes were affectionately fixed upon Walter until they began to glisten, when she resumed both her work and her

remarks. "And yet it *is* hard and disappointing, isn't it, after Mr. Brown had as good as promised to make dear Allan his heir, and had said so much about the debt of gratitude he owed to your poor father, which is all true enough, and Allan had done nothing in the world to offend him; to find that he is not to get a shilling after all, nor you either, I suppose? What they quarrelled about I could never make out, but Mr. Brown is wayward and touchy, and Allan, dear boy, has sometimes such hasty ways with him, that I suppose—well, there's no knowing, but I believe everything's for the best."

"You may be sure of one thing, mother, that Allan never gave him, nor any one else, the smallest just ground of offence."

"Of that I am sure as I am of my own existence. I was in hopes that his absence would prevent any further bickerings, and reconcile Mr. Brown, and that's one reason why I have never pressed his return home; but then, to be sure, I never dreamt of this Mr. Holmes turning up, and being taken

into such sudden favour, and made his heir, after all the hard names that he used to call him."

"Whatever he might have been formerly, his present conduct is irreproachable; he seems to be thoroughly reformed. We are already upon intimate terms: I like him much; and I think we shall find him a very agreeable neighbour."

"Well, I hope we may. He certainly seems a nice young man, and after all he is Mr. Brown's own flesh and blood—his sister's only child—so that it's very natural, you know, and one cannot wonder; and yet, considering your poor father's services, one cannot help wishing——"

"What, mother?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing. Mr. Brown has been very good to us already, and I am most thankful for all his past favours."

"We are not likely, I suspect, to receive any more; I do not see any reason, therefore, for longer deferring my marriage with Ellen, which, from your great apprehension that it might offend him, I have so long con-

sented to postpone. I am in treaty, as you know, with another exporting manufacturer at Gloucester, who wants a superintendant and corresponding clerk ; and if I obtain the situation, I shall be well enabled to support a wife, without encroaching upon your comforts, which has hitherto been my great fear as well as Ellen's."

"My dear boy ! I wish you would think more of yourself and less of me. It was on your account and Allan's that I was fearful of offending Mr. Brown, but now I don't see why you should any longer delay your marriage, especially if you get this appointment at Gloucester, and I will live with you wherever you settle ; and, please God ! Allan shall come back to us, and we will all be as happy together as the day is long, though we may not be as rich as some of our neighbours."

"And thus we may be gainers after all, dear mother, by losing Mr. Brown's fortune. I shall, for one, at all events, and I will immediately set off for Gloucester to see whether I cannot close the negotiation at once."

“Do, my dear boy ! and may God bless and prosper you, wherever you go !”

Captain Molloy was busily employed in repairing and cleaning a double-barrelled gun, which he had taken to pieces for the purpose, while a lean spaniel, squatted on its haunches, intently watched the process, with an occasional snappish whine, as if impatient for its completion, and the commencement of sport. Matilda, seated at the window, so that she could render herself visible to any passing wayfarer whom she might wish to intercept, was occupied in adjusting some showy feathers to a straw hat which, in conjunction with her flaunting new pelisse, was destined to astound the congregation on the following Sunday : Ellen sat in one corner of the room with her guitar, humming to herself some tender stanzas which Walter had addressed to her, when her father exclaimed : “ Well, girls ! you hav’n’t told me yet which of you is to set her cap at the young squire. *By* the powers ! that chap is now one of the greatest catches in the county—Brown’s own nephew

—his only relation—his acknowledged heir—ay, and won't have long to wait, I reckon; for the old boy was uncommonly rickety and wheezy last time I called at the Manor-House. 'Tilda, you sly jade! is that dashing hat meant to help you in the conquest? Oh! it's you, then, is it, who are to win the prize?"

"That remains to be seen; but Ellen, you know, is entirely out of the question."

"Out of the question! How so?"

"Why, my dear Papa! if you don't know it already, I think it is high time you should; she is engaged to Walter Latimer. Come, come, Ellen! don't sit there blushing and panting as if you were ashamed of yourself; you have done nothing wrong, so tell Papa all about it." With much confusion, and blushing, intermingled with tears, Ellen related the conditional contract she had made with Walter, adding that neither party wished the marriage to be solemnized unless he should succeed in procuring the employment for which he was then negotiating; and concluding with an

impassioned appeal to her father to give his sanction to their nuptials. With all his faults, Molloy loved his children; circumstances known at this moment only to himself, but which were soon destined to transpire, threatened to compel his departure from Woodcote, and perhaps to render a trip to some foreign country highly expedient; recollecting all which contingencies, he kissed Ellen with much affection, gave a ready consent to her union whenever she herself might think it right, pronounced Walter to be as good and kind-hearted a fellow as ever lived, and wished her all sorts of happiness with the man of her choice. Hiding her head in his bosom, poor Ellen wept those delightful tears which are so much more expressive of gratitude than the most fervent eloquence, cordially embraced her sister in return for her congratulations, and hurried off to communicate what had occurred to her lover, and to learn whether he had received any fresh intelligence from Gloucester.

“Tilda, dear!” said the father, as soon as

her sister had disappeared ; “ this is a fortunate affair,—comes in the very nick of time,—more so than I can explain to you just now ;—and I’d wish the marriage to take place with as little delay as may be. Ah ! my dear girl ! if you could only succeed in hooking the young Squire, and there’s little time to be lost, I can tell you that,—if I could only see you and Ellen married—*by* the powers ! I wouldn’t care a rap what became of myself. I’d be over the water in a jiffy. As an old soldier, I have been used to rough it, and can fight my own battles anywhere.”

Prompted by these significant hints, which filled her with the more apprehension from their undefined nature, Matilda enacted over again all the wiles, and schemes, and allurements she had practised upon Allan Latimer, always excepting the summer-house trick, of which she had become too heartily ashamed to attempt its repetition : but she had to deal with a much more wary character—with one who, quickly penetrating her motives, found no difficulty in baffling

her devices, and was totally unmoved by her enticements. Her forwardness only gave additional attraction to the modest and retiring manners of Ellen, whose charms and accomplishments had already made as much impression upon Holmes as his heart was calculated to receive. For reasons of his own, he was anxious to take a wife from Woodcote, from among the acquaintance of his uncle; and finding that he always spoke in more flattering terms of Ellen Molloy than of any one else, he submitted his wishes to him, and asked his permission to pay her his addresses, taking special care to state that he had never spoken to her upon the subject, and would instantly abandon his intentions if they did not meet with his entire concurrence.

“Ods bobs!” exclaimed the uncle, in no small surprise; “this is a sudden affair, Simon. Why, you can hardly have seen enough of the girl to know your own mind yet.”

“Your favourable mention of her, my dear uncle, has induced me to be more often

in her society than you may perhaps imagine."

" Ah ! you sly dog !"

" That epithet does not apply to me, I can assure you. Alas ! throughout my whole life I have been only too open, too unreserved, and have thus often exposed myself to censures which a more crafty man would have escaped. I have said nothing, done nothing that can in the smallest degree compromise her or myself. I defer everything to you ; your will is mine. I should be the most ungrateful of wretches if I did not always make it so. In fact you are in some degree responsible for the attachment I have formed."

" The deuce I am ! How so ?"

" Your praises of her conduct and character first turned my attention towards Ellen ;—you have known and observed her much longer than myself, and I never in my whole life knew you to be once mistaken in your judgment."

" Well, there's something in that ; and I do believe she's as good a girl as ever lived ;

but, zooks, boy ! why must you marry any one ? Look at me. *I* never married, and though I am now more than twice your age, I don't feel a bit more inclined to marry than I did when I was a youngster."

" Mine has been a roaming life, you know ; I have acquired a habit of rambling from one place to another, and if I seek to marry now, it is that I may not run away from Woodcote, that I may become settled, and devote the remainder of my life to my dear uncle."

" Run away from Woodcote, boy ! Mustn't talk of it—can't spare you, and won't. If you've taken a fancy to Ellen, you've my consent, therefore, to woo and win her ; but, as I am always ready to play a game of billiards with you, or toddle down to the farm when you wish it, I can't see what on earth you want with a wife. At all events *I* never married. Ha ! ha !"

Few as had been the interviews between Holmes and Ellen Molloy, he had seen enough to satisfy him that he did not stand very high in her favour, and that his

chances of success must depend more upon her father's exertion of authority than his own powers of ingratiation. Betaking himself, therefore, in the first instance to the Captain, he requested permission to pay his addresses to his youngest daughter, adding that his uncle approved his choice, and gave his full consent to the measure. "Permission, my dear fellow!" cried the delighted father, jumping up and vehemently shaking his hand; "to be sure I will, and more too;—I'll promise that you shall have her. Faith and troth! any girl in the country might jump mast high to catch such an offer, for your uncle's fine fortune and the Manor-House estate are not to be sneezed at. But was it the youngest you said? Was it Ellen? Are you quite clear that you mean Ellen?" demanded the father, who had just then recollected her engagement with Walter.

"To be sure I am;—upon such a subject one is not likely to make a mistake."

"Egad! I don't know that. If you're not an obstinate fellow, Holmes, when

you've once taken up an idea—and I don't think you are ;—if you're not particular, I mean foolishly particular,—if it wouldn't make any difference to you,—if it was all the same thing,—*couldn't* you say the eldest instead of the youngest? 'Tilda instead of Ellen?"

"Quite impossible, Captain!"

"Why so? it's all out of the same family, you know,—only one sister instead of t'other, which can't make any great odds, I should think. *By* the powers! 'Tilda's the finest girl in Gloucestershire! You've never seen her ride,—nor dance,—nor play upon the harp. Between ourselves, Holmes,"—and here the speaker lowered his voice to a confidential whisper,—“I rather think, you lucky dog! that you've made a strong impression in that quarter,—that is, if I can read eyes and sighs, and all that sort of thing. Poor 'Tilda!"

"My mind is quite made up, Captain. Give me your consent for Ellen, or I will make my bow at once."

"Bless us and save us! How positive

you are about such a trifle! Well, if you must have Ellen, you must, and a charming girl she is; and I give you my consent, my dear boy, with the greatest pleasure in life."

Holmes took his leave, and Molloy, hoping to conquer Ellen's anticipated scruples by blazoning the advantages and grandeur of the proposed alliance, hastened to find her. Swinging forward with an elastic step, carolling a merry song, making his rattan whiz through the air as he performed the sword exercise, and affecting an extravagant delight, he shouted out as he approached her, "Hurra! hurra! give you joy, Ellen! here's news, grand news! Come and kiss me, my dear girl, and you shall hear it all." After which exordium he proceeded to relate the conversation he had held with Holmes, dwelling particularly on the previous sanction obtained from Brown, and painting in glowing colours the immense advantages that would accrue to herself and all her family from so splendid an alliance.

"I have not interrupted you, papa," panted Ellen when he had concluded,

“because I have really been unable to speak, and I could not believe that I rightly understood what you were saying. Can it be possible that you have forgotten my engagement with Walter Latimer, and the betrothal to which you so recently gave your sanction?”

“Tush! my dear Ellen! that was under different circumstances—totally different—quite another thing. Holmes hadn’t then come forward; a girl may always change her mind, as I told you once before—hundreds do so every day; nobody expects these idle love-promises to be kept. Surely you wouldn’t throw yourself away upon a beggar, when you may, by marrying such a nice young fellow as Holmes, secure old Brown’s large fortune and the Manor-House estate!”

Ellen was gentle, meek, usually acquiescent, and never excited to vehemence; but under this placid exterior there were deep feeling, inflexible firmness, and a profound sense of honour and rectitude. She said little, for she was not a person of many

words, and she was restrained by respect for her father; but her calm, decided, emphatic rejection of the proffered suit showed how indignant she was at the very thought of sacrificing Walter to any rival, however flattering might be his prospects. Foiled in this direction, her father next attempted to work upon her fears and feelings, by stating his own desperate circumstances, and hinting at an ugly exposure with which he was threatened, and which might throw the whole family so completely out of society as to compel their removal from Woodcote, and perhaps from England.

“If we are threatened with calamities,” was the reply, “never, never will I believe that they can be averted by treachery and falsehood. No, I will walk in the straight path—I will do what truth and honour require; and then, if sorrows and troubles overtake us, I shall find a support and consolation in exclaiming—God’s will be done!”

Provoked at what he termed her unaccountable perverseness, and believing that

so mild and meek a girl, though she would not be persuaded or cajoled, might easily be intimidated, her father now had recourse to angry menaces, declaring that all her objections were frivolous and disobedient, that the safety of the whole family depended upon her union with Holmes, and adding with an oath that he would compel her to marry him whether she liked it or not.

Ellen wept bitterly when he left her, for she had never before incurred the serious displeasure of her father ; but as she would not suffer his threats any more than his entreaties to make her swerve from a decision which she felt to be right, she presently dried her tears, walked over to Mrs. Latimer's cottage, and related to her and Walter the distressing interview that had just occurred, asking their joint advice how she should act. "How you should act, dearest Ellen !" exclaimed the latter ; "can there be a moment's doubt upon the subject? By Heaven ! I am glad it has come to this, for I shall now claim the performance of your vow."

"What vow?" inquired Ellen in a faint voice.

"Do you not remember the solemn promise you made me in the Shaw Lane, that, if any attempt were made to force your inclinations, you would immediately consent to our marriage?"

"That agreement had reference to Mr. Cavendish."

"Nay, nay, you shall not escape me thus. It had reference to your peace of mind,—to your rescue from an uncomfortable home, from coercion and intimidation, which are quite as urgent and imminent now, if not more so, than they were then. How say you, mother? don't you think Ellen's former pledge is binding upon her in this case of Holmes?"

"I must give a verdict against you, my sweet girl, I must indeed," smiled the mother.

"And look, dear Ellen!" resumed the lover; "it seems as if Heaven itself were propitious to our union without further delay, for here is a letter I have just re-

ceived from Gloucester, securing to me the situation for which I had applied, although the parties will not be ready to receive me for a few weeks. That will just give time for our wedding. How very fortunate!" The mother's solicitations were now added to those of her son; Ellen, superior to all affectation of prudery, and compelled to admit that her pledge was binding in spirit if not in the letter, consented to marry without awaiting the sanction of her father; the compact was ratified by mutual embraces, and it was agreed that it should be carried into effect with the least possible delay. At the suggestion of Ellen it was further resolved to take Matilda into their confidence; and a trusty as well as invaluable ally she proved, entering heartily into their plans, and forwarding all the preliminary arrangements with so much zeal and activity that everything was soon in readiness. On the evening previous to the day on which the marriage was to be solemnized, the happy pair were sitting in the alcove of Mrs. Latimer's garden, discussing their future

plans, and enjoying that exchange of perfect confidence and intercommunion of soul which is the sweet privilege of affianced lovers, when the maid brought a letter to Walter, which he had no sooner perused than he ejaculated, "Gracious Heaven ! Allan is in prison !"

"In prison !" echoed Ellen.

"Yes—Crevetti writes me word that he has been arrested for debt, and urges me to set off instantly for London that I may assist in procuring his liberation. But read—read it yourself. Poor Allan ! he is the last person I should have thought likely to—How very unfortunate ! What—what is to be done ?"

"There is but one course to pursue. You must hurry up to London immediately."

"But our wedding, dear Ellen—it is fixed for to-morrow."

"I know it ; but could you expect it to be blessed if you were to leave your brother languishing in prison, that you might proceed to the marriage altar ?"

“Oh no, no, no!”

“Do you think that, with this sad misfortune weighing upon my heart, I could enjoy a moment’s happiness during our honeymoon?”

“I’m sure *I* couldn’t, dear Ellen; the thought of Allan’s imprisonment would make me miserable.”

“Then our marriage must be deferred for the present. It will be all the merrier after you have effected his liberation.”

“True—true; and that will be soon, I trust. I will hasten up to town by the very first coach.”

“Do, dear Walter! and God speed you on your pious errand!”

At an early hour of the following morning the pensive lover, instead of hastening to the church, as he had anticipated, to receive the hand of his mistress, was whirling along the dusty road, on the outside of one of the London stages.

CHAPTER VIII.

Two days after Isola had left London, Crevetti returned to it, his hand completely restored to its functions, and his general health much benefited by his residence at the sea-side. His reappearance was serviceable to Allan, who, since the departure of the fascinating Italian—a privation which seemed to be like removing the sun from his moral hemisphere—had sunk into a total prostration of spirits. From this lethargy he was compelled to rouse himself, in order to settle with Crevetti, and make arrangements respecting his pupils,—a great proportion of whom, attracted by the captivating manners and appearance of the younger master, wished to make him a permanent substitute for their old one. Too

honourable to listen to any such proposals, he insisted upon the reinstatement of the friend for whom he had acted ; and in order to silence every objection and afford perfect satisfaction to Crevetti, whose jealousy was aroused by these symptoms of defection, he announced his resolution of giving up teaching, and of abandoning music altogether as a profession. This sacrifice he had the less hesitation in making as he believed that the additional and much more welcome exertions of his pen would always supply him with the means of subsistence on a moderate scale.

A very short experience served to dispel this illusion. The new editor of the periodical to which he had hitherto contributed had literary friends of his own, to whom he wished to give a preference ; other publications of a similar nature could afford no opening for his effusions ; the booksellers with whom he had made acquaintance recommended a work of fiction in three volumes, which he commenced without loss of time, only to approximate to the situation

of the horse in the adage, while the grass was growing. Short indeed was the time ere he made the painful discovery that literature, though a good assistant, is a bad supporter,—that it is a serviceable walking-stick, but by no means a trustworthy crutch.

The horse which he had purchased for the sole purpose of accompanying Isola in her rides had already been sold, but, owing to an injury accidentally received in the stable, it produced scarcely a fourth of its cost. Allan was sanguine; he might miscalculate his resources, and act upon the erroneous estimate thus formed; but he was not wilfully improvident—far from it; and he had no sooner learnt the precarious nature of the supplies upon which he had hitherto depended, than he commenced a rigid system of retrenchment. His supper-parties were discontinued; he made no more purchases; he sent a portion of his water-colour drawings to an auctioneer to be disposed of by public sale, only to learn that, so long as a man goes on buying, however inadequate may be his means, he has a

chance of maintaining his credit, but that the moment he begins selling he becomes an object of distrust.

Many circumstances had combined to obtain for him a larger share of credit than he had ever been entitled to receive, some of the tradesmen really believing that he was the brother of the celebrated singer, the money-making Italian—others that he was her lover, and might at any time command her purse. To them the departure of Isola was equivalent to the removal of Fortunatus's cap from his head, and they began to watch his proceedings with much suspicion, especially when they found, from his altered style of living, that they had little more to gain by trusting him. In other and higher quarters, among his more immediate associates and acquaintance, Allan began to observe a marked difference of demeanour. Isola's friendship, and the enchantment that she threw around his parties, giving him a temporary vogue in a certain coterie, had occasioned him to be sought by many who, now that these attractions had ceased, were

not sorry to drop an acquaintance from which nothing further was to be gained. Others kept aloof from the apprehension that the economising stage of his life would soon lead to the borrowing one; and though there were among his associates several exceptions to these selfish and pitiful defaulters, —several who were too generous to treat him with coldness, or even with any visible diminution of cordiality,—he could not help suspecting that all shared the same feeling, and that he occupied a totally different and much inferior position in society, now that his means were circumscribed and that he had lost the fair magnet by whom his visitants had been chiefly attracted. These humbling convictions were succeeded by an attack of illness, which incapacitated him from struggling with the pecuniary embarrassments now beginning to gather round him.

During this melancholy period of confinement and indisposition he had ample leisure to review his past life,—a retrospect which, in the first instance, prompted him to complain

of the hardship of his lot. "Surely," he thought, "mine has been a cruel fate,—may I not say an unmerited one? for I cannot charge myself with any wilful misconduct. Twice have I been unfortunate in my attachments. Without any offence of which I am aware I have been compelled to withdraw from Woodcote. I have lost the friendship of Mr. Brown, and all prospect of his future favour. I come to London,—I am blessed for a short time with the society of Isola,—I become passionately attached to her, only to feel the more keenly the bitter and the lasting pang of losing her. I obtain abundant credit, which is equivalent to the command of wealth—I am surrounded, like Tantalus, with a thousand temptations—I can safely say that I have not indulged in one low, or grovelling, or sensual vice,—and yet I am beset with difficulties, tormented with duns, threatened with arrest!"

In pronouncing a verdict between themselves and fate, how few men are impartial! Allan's judgment had been momentarily warped by his self-love; but he was too

clear-headed, too upright, too stern in his integrity, to pronounce a deliberate sentence of acquittal where he felt that justice demanded condemnation, and, after a short communing with himself, he thus pursued his cogitations:—"No; I cannot lay that flattering unction to my soul. I cannot adopt the inconsiderate expression of Burns, and exclaim, 'And yet the light that led astray was light from heaven:' nor can I claim the merit of that patient self-denial which is always combating its own desires, and always comes off victorious. True, I have indulged only in the luxuries of the heart and of the intellect; I have yielded only to the temptations of literature, art, and science—to the enticements of high and polished civilization—to those refinements of social urbanity which are only to be enjoyed in such a metropolis as London; but if my circumstances forbade these gratifications, pure and exalted as they were—if I have purchased them with the property of others, which I must have done to be so much in debt—they may not less justly upbraid me than if I had wasted

it in low riot and debauchery. For an honest man it is not sufficient to conquer solicitations to undue expenses on the evil side of his nature; he must equally resist those that tempt his noblest feelings, his love of the fine arts, of enlightened society, of all that is high and hallowing. These he may admire and reverence, but if they are beyond his means he should not attempt their possession. I feel that I have been improvident, and I am well aware that I must shortly incur the penalty of my thoughtlessness."

This prophecy was speedily verified. An execution was placed in his apartments, and on the following day he was arrested by the holder of an unpaid note of hand which he had given in payment of a drawing. The officer intrusted with the writ proved to be the same from whose house in Cursitor-street he had formerly made his escape; and as he refused again to be accountable for one whom he designated as "a slippery leg-bail customer," he delivered him at once into the Fleet Prison. Still more sick at heart

than in body, the disconsolate Allan knew not to what quarter he might betake himself for advice or assistance. Isola was no longer in England; Harry Freeman, to whom he had been so much indebted on a previous occasion, had accepted an invitation to perform the parts of chief mate and Merry Andrew on board a yacht, for he was an admirable sailor, and was at that moment cruising off Cadiz:—among all his acquaintance there was not one to whom he could bring himself to disclose his humiliating situation except Crevetti, who hastened to him the very moment he learnt his misfortune, and most cordially proffered every assistance in his power. Without waiting for Allan's concurrence, he wrote to Walter at Woodcote, and then busied himself in ascertaining the probable value of the assets, and the amount of the various claims, with a view to their ultimate liquidation.

Upon his arrival in London, the wonders and the magnificence of which were all unnoticed as he drove along, so completely was his mind absorbed by the mournful

errand upon which he came, Walter jumped into a hackney cabriolet, was driven to the Fleet Prison, and led to the narrow room, or rather closet, in which Allan was immured. Melancholy as was the place of meeting, the brothers rushed into each other's arms with such delight that for a moment everything was forgotten except the joy of their interview. Walter's countenance, however, quickly changed as he gazed upon the face of the prisoner, and exclaimed, "Good Heavens! Allan, how much you are altered! how pale you look! We must get you out of this horrid place without a moment's delay." And then, making not a single allusion to the mode in which the debts had been contracted, he inquired their amount.

"It is large enough to make me blush with shame," was the reply, "and yet not so much as I had feared. Crevetti, who has been indefatigable in his friendly exertions, has had my assets appraised by a broker, and has made out a list of the claims upon me; here it is. The balance against

me, you see, is not very heavy—yet it is, considering my circumstances. I will not attempt to palliate my extravagance. I have no defence to offer.”

“What, Allan! is this all? Why, the whole is quite within our means. It is less, much less, than the amount of the stock standing in our joint names. Why did you not send me down a power of attorney to sell it?”

“Because only half of it is mine;—because I was determined not to encroach upon a fund the interest of which is absolutely necessary for the expenses at Woodcote, and for the comfort of our dear mother.”

“But I have procured a situation at Gloucester which will enable me to appropriate to those objects more than we shall now want to subtract from our joint stock.”

“On reflection, Walter, I admit that my creditors have a fair claim upon my own moiety; but yours I will not touch.”

“Dear Allan! I only ask you to be just. If the cases were reversed,—if I were in debt and in prison,—what would you do for me?”

"Give you every shilling I had in the world," ejaculated Allan with tears in his eyes.

"And how would you feel if I were to refuse your proffered assistance? Come, come, Allan! of all the days in the year, you must not disoblige me to-day. I was to have been married this morning!" He then related all that had taken place between himself and Ellen, and the abrupt deferment of their nuptials occasioned by the receipt of Crevetti's letter. "What a wretch I am!" groaned Allan, "thus to have marred your happiness."

"It is not marred,—you have protracted only to increase it. It is customary, you know, for relations to make wedding presents to one another. Well, you shall anticipate yours,—you shall this day make me the most acceptable of all presents, by giving me the pleasure, the delight of assisting to set you at liberty." Allan, melting into tears, and too much affected to be able to speak, tenderly embraced his brother; and Walter, taking his silence for

consent, hurried out of the room, declaring that he would fly instantly to Crevetti, to claim his assistance in selling the stock and making arrangements for liquidating every debt. These measures were speedily accomplished, for the old Italian, who was sincerely attached to Allan, never rested till he was released from the prison, after which he accompanied the brothers to the coach-office, and stood by the side of the vehicle snapping his fingers with delight, and uttering incessant Anglo-Italian congratulations and adieus until they drove away.

Mrs. Latimer, utterly bewildered by the miracle of Allan's embarrassment and arrest,—for she had always held him up as a paragon of discretion,—had been suffering an agony of suspense ever since the departure of Walter, whose incessant occupations, during his brief abode in London, had prevented his writing to her. So irrepressible therefore was her delight, her ecstasy, when the stage drove up to the gate, and deposited both her sons, that she rushed out to the

front garden with a joyful cry, kissing and eagerly welcoming them, and asking them all manner of questions without waiting for a reply, and curtsying very profoundly to the coachman, (a civility, however, which he declined accepting instead of the remainder of the fare,) and finally putting her arms into those of her sons, and pressing them closely to her side, as if she were afraid that they might run away again. Scarcely less tender was Walter's greeting with Ellen, who chanced to be at the cottage when he arrived, and who blushed so sweetly when he ventured to salute her, that he could not resist a repetition of the offence. A happier family meeting it would be impossible to imagine, although the mother's exhilaration was slightly damped when she observed the pale cheek of Allan, who assured her, in reply to her anxious inquiries, that the restoration to his family, his friends, and his native air, would speedily effect a complete re-establishment of his health.

At the suggestion of Mrs. Latimer, who

was always most desirous of preserving for her sons the good opinion of Mr. Brown, Allan walked over to the Manor-House on the following morning for the purpose of paying his respects and of announcing his return to Woodcote. The moment of his calling was auspicious, for in the parlour he found John Chubbs, wearing his Waterloo medal and a smiling countenance, while he counted over the money he was paying to his landlord as a final instalment upon the over-due rent. These monthly operations had always produced a most gracious mood in the receiver of the cash; and as this cleared the slate and wiped off all old scores, Brown's affability and good temper ascended to the culminating point. He had been highly offended with Allan for flying away from Woodcote without assigning any adequate reason,—he had parted from him in anger,—he had never alluded to him since except to speak of him as a silly fellow who didn't know on which side his bread was buttered ;—but when he glanced at Chubbs's gold on one side of him, and on the other

marked the pale face and dejected expression of Allan, all was forgotten in a moment: he shook him most heartily by the hand, welcomed him back, and expressed his hope that he would now remain permanently at Woodcote.

“Sit down, John Chubbs,” cried his landlord, “and don’t stand there twiddling your hat;—don’t owe me a farthing now—quits!—want to talk to you about Fanny Groombridge—want you to walk down with me to my new farm; but I must have a little chat first with my young friend, Allan.” He accordingly began to catechise him about his late proceedings,—an inquisition which might have occasioned some little embarrassment to its object, had it not been interrupted by the entrance of John Trotman, ushering in the lunatic lady, and the medical gentleman under whose care she had been placed. Owing to the state of her health, a considerable interval had elapsed since he had been enabled to bring her over on her stated visits to the Manor-House, and Brown, who was not only

deeply interested in her mysterious fate, but had become almost as much attached to her as if she were his own child, was proportionately delighted to see her looking more beautiful than ever, while her mental malady, although her faculties were still alienated, had assumed a much more serene and tranquil character. To Allan, who had heard her melancholy story, and who was highly gratified at thus unexpectedly encountering her, she appeared the most interesting creature he had ever beheld, with the single exception of Isola. "If," thought he, "there can be so much perfect elegance of appearance and deportment, so much suavity of manner, so much graciousness and play of countenance, while the intellectual sun is under eclipse, and the music of her voice is silent,—what would she be were her reason fully restored, and her tongue unchained?" So completely was he wrapped in pity and admiration as he kept his eyes immovably fixed upon her, that he did not hear the merchant whisper, "Charming creature, isn't she, Allan? Poor

thing, poor thing ! Never saw her before, did you ? Another stranger to introduce to you,—Simon Holmes, my nephew—where the deuce has he got to ? Want him to see the poor mad lady—can't think where he has got to—send for him directly :” with which words he rang the bell sharply.

John Trotman was a sort of ubiquitarian. Wherever he might be, and however occupied, he always contrived to hear and promptly to answer the bell, although he never seemed to be in a hurry. “ Where's Mr. Holmes ?” inquired his master, as he entered.

“ Next room, speaking to two gentlemen,” was the reply.

“ Two gentlemen ! who can they be, I wonder ? Why didn't you show them in here ?”

“ Strangers. Wished to speak to him alone.”

“ As soon as they are gone tell him we want him in the parlour.” Scarcely had John retired when a loud and angry altercation, followed by what sounded like a des-

perate scuffle and exchange of blows, was heard from the adjoining apartment, the door of which was rudely thrown open, and two strange men rushed into the parlour, dragging after them the struggling Holmes, whom they had collared. At sight of the latter the lunatic, springing from her chair, while both her clenched hands were suddenly pressed to her head, stood for a moment transfixed and motionless as a statue, with open mouth and widely distended eyes, while he upon whom they were riveted, utterly astounded and aghast, recoiled with a shuddering shout of horror, as if he beheld some grisly apparition. Uttering at length a piercing scream, she rushed or rather leaped forwards, murmuring, as she threw herself into his arms, "It is my husband! it is—it is my long-lost husband!"

Still shrinking with manifest terror from her embrace, Holmes, turning deadly pale, and trembling violently all over, timorously ventured, as if still agonised with terror, and still distrusting the evidence of his senses, to steal a glance at her features, then to feel

her face and hands ; after which he drew a deep breath, dropped his head over hers, and exclaimed in a hoarse, hollow voice, " It is indeed Agnes—it is my wife—and *living* ! I thought she was dead—I thought she was dead ! " which latter words he continued repeatedly muttering to himself.

As if revived and inspired with a fresh energy by the very sound of his voice, his wife started from his bosom, seized the arm of one of the Bow Street officers, for such they were, crying out, as she shook it with a convulsive vehemence, " Villain ! unhand my husband—unhand him, I say ! It is you who assaulted and wounded him before ! " But, finding that she could not produce the smallest effect upon the iron grasp that still held him prisoner, she sprang aside, and, falling on her knees before her medical attendant, exclaimed, " Oh, Doctor ! Doctor ! will you allow this ? will you suffer them to carry off my husband ? Oh, save him ! save him ! "

" My dear lady ! " replied the party thus addressed, " let me implore you to be calm

—not to make yourself unhappy,—for this is perhaps the most fortunate occurrence that could have happened. You see, Mr. Brown,” he continued, evidently more interested in the medical results of this scene upon his patient than in any other of its probable consequences, “it is exactly as I foretold—this fresh shock promises to restore her sanity.”

Concluding, from his look and language, that he did not mean to interfere in her behalf, his kneeling petitioner now turned towards Allan, ejaculating, as she clasped her hands passionately together, “To you then I appeal, for I see kindness and compassion in your face. You are young—you are strong—you are a man. Help, oh! help me, for pity’s sake, and do not suffer these ruffians to tear away my husband a second time!”

The impassioned tones, the vehement gestures, and the beseeching eyes of the beautiful creature thus appealing to him on her knees, produced such an electrical effect upon the thrilling heart of Allan, that he

bounded forwards, and, tearing away the arm of the foremost officer with one vigorous wrench, shouted out, "Fellows! you must unhand your prisoner, or by Heaven I'll make you! This gentleman is Captain Harcourt; and although I am utterly amazed at seeing him here, although I confess that some strange mystery attaches to him, I will not suffer him to be arrested until I know your right and your authority for thus acting."

"Captain Harcourt!" cried Chubbs, with staring eyes; "why, sure as ever I stand here, that chap be the monk that climbed into my cart! I can swear to him anywhere by the scar on his cheek."

Brown, who had hitherto been silent from sheer bewilderment, now vociferated, "What's the meaning of all this jabber about the monk, and Captain Harcourt, and the devil knows what? You're all playing a game of cross purposes—all at sixes and sevens. I tell you, fellows, this is neither a monk nor Captain Harcourt—but Simon Holmes, my nephew, though he is so

strangely altered somehow that I myself should hardly——Why, Simon! you have shaved off your whiskers.”

“No, Sir,” said one of the officers, “it is we who tore off his false whiskers, though we were obliged to have a struggle for it; but we wanted to make sure of our bird, and to look for the scar upon his cheek,—and there it is, you see, so that there can’t be a mistake of no sort.”

“But still,” persisted Brown, “it is Simon Holmes, I tell you—my nephew. Surely his own uncle, who has known him from a child, cannot be mistaken.”

“Yes, there *must* be some misapprehension,” added Allan; “for I repeat that to my certain knowledge this gentleman has passed by the name of Captain Harcourt.”

“Ay, Sir, and by half a dozen others,” replied the chief officer; “here is our warrant for his apprehension: it specifies more than one *alias*. We are determined to execute our orders: we have a postchaise in waiting, and we must convey our prisoner instantly to Gloucester gaol.”

“Zooks, man! what for?—what for?—what offence has he committed?” demanded Brown, brandishing his cane, while Chubbs and Allan made demonstration of supporting him in preventing the removal of the culprit.

“Gentlemen,” resumed the officer, producing his staff, “I warn you all in the King’s name against any vain attempts at a rescue, for we are armed, and fully resolved to resist force by force. *There* is our warrant—we are sure of our man—he stands charged with conspiracy and fraud, and I’m not sure that we can’t bring forgery home to him.”

“Simon, Simon Holmes! can this be so?” demanded the uncle, who began to suspect that his worst misgivings were too true. The culprit, who stood utterly confounded and still trembled all over, while his restless eyes alternately glanced round the room and at the kneeling figure of his wife, made no reply; but his confused and terrified looks sufficiently betrayed his guilt. “Nay, then,” cried Brown, lowering his

cane, which he had still held uplifted, "I see how it is,—every portion of his body pleads guilty. Allan,—Chubbs,—we must not offer any resistance to the law. Gentlemen, you may remove your prisoner. I see that you have good warrant for your proceedings, but I do trust that some of these heavy charges may not be supported."

As the officers led their unresisting captive towards the door, he turned round, made an effort to collect his faculties, and, looking imploringly at his uncle, said, in a hollow voice, "For God's sake, be kind to poor Agnes! I thought she had been long since dead. I alone am guilty: Agnes has never known anything of my misdeeds,—she is all goodness, all innocence, all purity!" For one moment he fixed his eyes with an expression of regretful anguish upon his wife, uttered a deep groan, and was led from the room.

Agnes, who during the recent colloquy had been looking on with a vague bewilderment, as if her mental alienation had returned, seemed to be recalled to conscious-

ness by the noise of the closing door, for she rose from her knees, as if for the purpose of hurrying after her husband, tottered forward a few paces, uttered a fearful shriek, and fell fainting on the floor. Taking her immediately up in his arms, for she was a light figure, the doctor said to Brown, "This is likely to prove a most important crisis to my patient, and I have every reason to hope that she will now permanently recover her faculties."

"Faculties! I don't care a farthing for faculties! What shall we do to restore animation?" asked the merchant, alarmed at her death-like appearance. "Poor thing, poor thing! she seems to be dead."

"No, no; these fainting-fits are sometimes of long continuance. I would do nothing at present, but suffer nature to revive her; nor would I on any account wish her to be removed. Can she again become your inmate for two or three days?"

"Days! ay, poor thing! for two or three months,—two or three years,—for ever, if she requires it."

“And will you allow me to remain until to-morrow? My presence may, perhaps, be essential.”

“To be sure I will, to be sure I will! and I’ll go and send Mrs. Glossop to you directly, that your patient may be carried to her own room.” And so saying, he hurried off, without taking any further notice of Allan or Chubbs, who immediately left the Manor-House, eager to communicate at their respective homes the strange, the startling occurrence they had just witnessed.

Letter from Mrs. Glossop to Mrs. Jellicoe.

“*Ma share* Mrs. Jellicoe,

“How sorry I am to learn that you have had a complaint in your biliary ducts, and that the quack you consulted has done you more harm than good! but the news that you are coming for some months to Cheltenham has quite given me a *batmong de coor*. I shall certainly ask master’s leave to go over and spend a fortnight with you, that we may have a regular *vis a vee*

after so long an absence. I will, as you desire, bring over some of the double stocks grown in my own garden, which are quite worthy of the Haughtyguttural Society. I suppose you were at the last show, for I understand there was a great *foule* there, as the French say.

“I believe I told you that the poor lady whom master found after she had lost her wits has been sent to a feesycian who keeps a house on purpose for two or three of these unfortunate *enfong gatays*. *Tong mew!* for I was always afraid of her breaking out some day or other into a catapasm of rage, and attacking some of us with a calving-knife in each hand, or perpetrating some other equally horrible *espieglerie*. Master has been kind enough to take John Chubbs out of prison, who has become a Teetotaler and given up *o. d. v.*, and drinks nothing but water, which I can’t help thinking must end in a dropsy. At present, however, he’s so much improved that you’d hardly take him for the same *tout autre chose*. Only to think of master’s nevy having come back to

him, like the prodigal son, and turning out quite a good young man, after being a downright *volovang* and committing ever so many *foe-paws* !

“I have reserved my last and most amusing piece of news for a *gobe mouche*. What do you think of my having made a conquest, of my inspiring a red-hot *la bell passion* in one of our neighbours? It's as true as a trivet ! Some time ago I received a synonimous letter, paying me all sorts of compliments, and calling me a full-blown rose—in fact quite a *Billy do*,—which I suspected, from the handwriting, to come from Mr. Spurling the grocer, and that converted me instantly into a *piece de resistance*, for I don't like him at all. He's a cockney, and can't exasperate the H, and isn't a man of edication, which is a thing I abominate, and squints, and has such a long sharp nose, that he looks for all the world like the sundial in our *jardang dagremong*. He came into the housekeeper's room t'other day to settle his monthly bill, just as I was turning over some of Crabbe's poems and Charles

Lamb's tales ; so says I, merely *pour passer le tong*, 'Do you prefer Lamb's tales or Crabbe's?' 'Vhy, upon my vord, Mrs. Glossop,' says he, 'I never tasted neither von nor t'other, and, to tell you the truth, I didn't know that crabs had tales.' Whereupon I broke into such a *Hecla de rear*, as the French say, that I thought I should have bust my stays. Then he talked about the money I had got in the savings-bank, and said I must have a capital place, and he supposed I made a pretty addition to the bills when I entered them in my book ; whereupon I flared up at such a bearfaced *soupson*. 'No,' says I, 'I never defrauded my master of a farthing in my life, and never will ; and I'm astonished at your thinking such a thing of me, whatever you may do yourself.' 'O, Mrs. Glossop,' says he, 'do listen to me, do listen to me ! I only wish you would grant me an earring. There's a particular respectable tradesman at Woodcote vhat's over ed and hears in love with you.' '*Mon doo !*' says I, 'who can that be?' 'O you knows!' was his reply ; 'and he

looked so uncommon hard at his own snout, that I really thought he had been uttering a tender postrophe to it; but presently he takes my hand and kisses it, and told me it was hisself.' 'Gracious goodness!' says I; why the late Mrs. Spurling only made her *deboo* from the world when we arrived at the Manor-House. She hasn't been long dead.' 'That's an uncommon true observation,' says he, 'but she vont be any deader if I vait ever so long. Consider, Mrs. Glossop, I don't come to you hempty anded, nor without ever an ouse over my ed. I've got an art in my bussom vhat doats upon you, —vidderers make the best husbands—and if you and I make a match on't, I think we might make the pot bile uncommon, purwiding you vould'nt be so wery petiklar about the little overcharges in the Squire's bills.' 'Mr. Spurling,' says I,—for my back was up at such a navish proposal,—'to dismiss all *eclaircissemong* at once, and speak to you plainly, I never will marry a rogue; so you may go about your business as soon as you please.' 'You're only a-standing in your

own light,' says he, 'like the man in the moon, or a thief in a candle.' 'You're more like the thief,' says I; and I walked out of the room, *au pied de la letter*, but not before he had the immutable insolence to call out, 'You're a hold hobstinate hass!' Was there ever such a fragrant instance of *bienvaillance*! Nobody knows better than yourself, *ma share*, that a person may be obstinate and an ass without any fault of their own; but to call them old, even if it's true, is flying in the face of Nature, which made them so. Mr. Spurling won't supply the Manor-House any longer, I can tell him that. Adieu, *ma share*.

"*Toojoors a voo!*

"MARY GLOSSOP.

"P.S. *O Ciel!* Such a *coo de tonnerre!* —Mr. Holmes turns out to be a downright *double-entendre* after all, and has just been taken off to prison! I'm in such a *jenny say quoi* that I can't write a word more."

CHAPTER IX.

TRANSGRESSORS and outlaws there are whose energies, however misdirected, prove them to be of a bold and generous nature; who, when they declare war against society and defy the vengeance of the law, evince a touch of heroism in their recklessness, as if they felt that the most exciting pleasure of life is the desperate course that places it in constant jeopardy. Even in tracing the exploits and escapes of such adventurers there is an excitement which sometimes defrauds us of our sympathies, when it ought to elicit our sternest reprobation. In this class of daring culprits Simon Holmes could not claim to be enrolled. His was the equally dishonest, but more ignoble course, which, while it violates the law,

seeks to avoid its more heavy penalties; which deals in fraud and swindling rather than an open highway defiance of justice, and depends more upon craft and evasion than upon vigour and audacity. Sensual, unprincipled, and timid, he was at once tempted into evil courses and fearful of their consequences, to guard against which he endeavoured to throw all the serious responsibility of his misdeeds upon his accomplices, and thus to share their profits without their risks. Being better educated and more astute than most of them, this knavish policy often succeeded; and when it threatened failure, he generally disguised himself and had recourse to a temporary flight. Bad as he was, it could hardly be said that he was an irreclaimable rascal, for his fears had repeatedly prompted him to return to an honest life; but he was too irresolute and indecisive to act upon these whisperings of his better angel.

Often arrested for debt, he had as often managed to procure his own extrication, but, as he knew his present confinement to be

grounded on a much more serious charge, supported by the testimony of a female accomplice, who had turned king's evidence, his prostration of spirit was utter and extreme. In a most abject and penitent letter to his uncle, he adjured him to favour him with an immediate interview, solemnly protesting that the whole offence with which he stood charged might be hushed up for a sum of money, and urging him most imploringly to prevent an exposure which would throw ignominy upon the family, by advancing the requisite funds to prevent it. Impelled not less by compassion for the prisoner than by an ardent curiosity to know his real history, Brown lost no time in obeying the summons, when the culprit, throwing himself upon his knees, confessed with many tears that he was utterly undeserving of favour or forgiveness, but harped upon the threatened exposure to the family, and again with piteous and grovelling appeals besought his auditor to buy him off.

"I suspect, Sir," replied his uncle, with a severe countenance, "that you have hitherto

been telling a pack of lies, so that I shall hardly know what to believe. Get up, Sir, from your knees—sit down in this chair; let me know your real history: and mark this, Sir,—it will be your interest to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; for if I catch you out in a lie, or the hundredth part of a lie, I shall instantly leave you to your fate, even if it should be the gallows. Ha! ha!” Having ratified this sentence with the ferule of his cane, he sat himself down, the prisoner placed himself in a chair at a little distance, and after a short pause, as if to collect his thoughts and dry his tears, thus began:—“Will you excuse me for stating at the outset that you yourself were in some degree the cause of all my errors, by your kindness in advancing the 750*l.* which I have so recently been enabled to repay you? To the command of this sum I fear I may attribute all my misfortunes,—first, because it showed me how easily money may be raised upon sham securities; and, secondly, because it helped me to procure a wife,—a virtuous and most

exemplary one, I confess,—whose fortune tempted me into all sorts of riot and excess.”

“ You’re a pretty fellow, arn’t you,” interposed Brown, “ to lay all your own shameful misconduct at my door and your innocent wife’s ? If that 750*l.* proved your ruin, it was—first, because you were a cheating rascal, and, secondly, because you were a dissipated fool. Had you there ! Go on.”

“ Alas ! alas ! perhaps you are right, Sir,” sighed the prisoner, who had been glad to catch at any excuse, however absurd. “ Chance had introduced me to Agnes Hatherland, the orphan daughter of a clergyman : she was then living at Wandsworth with her only relation, an aged aunt ; she was beautiful and accomplished. I really loved her, but I am not sure that I should have paid her my addresses had I not learnt that she had a small fortune in her own possession. I represented myself as your commercial partner in London, having previously engaged a counting-house, on the door of which I inscribed the firm of Brown and Holmes. I had the command of 750*l.* ;

I kept horses and servants ; I won the affections of Agnes ; the aunt was completely deceived as to my circumstances ; we were married ; and, for a short time, I enjoyed such perfect happiness with my wife, who was every way as amiable and good as she was beautiful, that I was guilty of no misdeed, except plunging into an improvident expense in my style of living. Soon after our union her aunt died, and I then removed to Woodford in Essex, where I furnished a house in a lavish style, riding or driving every day to London, as if I were regularly engaged in business, though I was chiefly occupied in dissipating my wife's fortune in wild excesses of all sorts, into which I was seduced by some profligate characters, with whom I had unfortunately become acquainted.

“ In less than a year I had nothing left, but I studiously concealed my situation from my wife, well knowing, such was her inflexible integrity and high sense of honour, that she would insist upon our selling off everything and living like paupers, which

would have interfered with all my plans and speculations for recovering what I had wasted. Nor dared I—for she was not less strict in morals than refined in manners—introduce any of my loose companions to our house at Woodford. In fact, her pure life and sentiments seemed to reproach me for my course of life, and I began to dislike her, and to absent myself from home for several days at a time, urging as a reason the pressure of business in the City. The birth of a little boy rekindled my affection for his mother, and for some time after her confinement I paid her all the attentions that her situation required; but the child was accidentally killed by falling from his nurse's arms; her health was injured by the shock; the nutriment intended for her babe brought on an alarming fever, and she became delirious. At this juncture a writ was out against me; a sheriff's officer forced himself into the house to serve it; in a moment of irritation I assaulted him furiously with a bludgeon, when he snatched up a cutlass, with which he severely wounded

me on the cheek, and at that instant my poor wife, alarmed by our struggle, ran into the room, screaming out as she saw my plight, 'It is my husband's blood—it is his blood!—Oh! save him—save him! Help! help!'"

"The very words," said Brown, "that the poor dear creature ejaculated when Trotman and I first encountered her in the unfurnished house, and she had cut her arms with the glass. Poor thing! I dare say her accident recalled the scene you have just been describing. Well, Sir, you will carry the scar of that wound to your grave; and it was to conceal it, I suppose, that you wore those bushy false whiskers. And what became of you next, and of your unfortunate wife?"

"This additional concussion and terror confirmed the alienation of her mind. After paying the debt for which I had been arrested, which was easily done by the sale of my furniture, I placed her in a private mad-house near London, and giving myself up to evil courses, following the bad example of bad

company, soon sunk into a regular scamp and blackleg, attending gaming-houses, races, and fairs, and at one time travelling about to such resorts with a gambling-booth of my own. I wish I had done nothing worse. My comrades led me into some extensive swindling transactions, which compelled me at last to quit the country for a short time ; and, as I thought I might as well turn my absence to good account, I went to Smyrna, in the hope of effecting a reconciliation with you, and of being thus enabled to reform my life : but you had left the place, which defeated my good intentions, and afforded another instance of my bad luck."

"Bad luck, Sir ? Bad conduct, bad heart, bad head, bad everything. Don't tell me of bad luck. Go on, Sir."

"On my returning to London, which I did immediately, I found my wife in the same unfortunate state, and a heavy demand was made upon me for the cost of her maintenance. A lucky hit at the gaming-table supplied the means of defraying it, and I removed her to a cheaper establishment of

the same nature near the banks of the Severn in Gloucestershire, where, however, I found that they required a larger advance, by way of security, than I had taken with me. I had allowed my wife to keep in her possession a valuable gold watch set with brilliants, to which she attached a particular value because it belonged to her mother, and contained a miniature of her father. This I deposited with the keeper of the madhouse as a collateral security."

"And that very watch is now locked up in my desk!—But go on, go on;—we'll talk of that by and by."

"At one of the London haunts which I frequented, passing myself off for a man of fashion, I had forced myself upon the acquaintance of a Mr. Cavendish, a weak, dissipated, extravagant coxcomb, whom I marked immediately for my prey, and as he was fond of cards, and an unsuspecting player, I quickly laid him under contribution. He solicited me to take part in some private theatricals which he was getting up at Cheltenham, in conjunction

with several friends,—an invitation which I gladly accepted, thinking it might be turned to good account. On my arrival at Cheltenham, I proceeded to visit my unfortunate wife, and, knowing that Cavendish was a great collector of old-fashioned trinketry, I reclaimed her jewelled watch from the keeper of the madhouse, not doubting that I should sell it to my friend at a considerable advance of price.

“The part allotted to me to perform was that of an old monk. I had completely painted and accoutred myself for a dress rehearsal one afternoon, when I was told that two strange men had been inquiring for me, and were then lurking behind one of the side-scenes. A furtive glance which I obtained without rendering myself visible, soon satisfied me that they were Bow Street officers, for one of my recent swindling transactions had set them on the alert, and I need hardly tell you that I lost not an instant in decamping from the house, which was situated on the outskirts of the town. Skulking along among the brakes and bushes, I presently

reached an old lime-kiln, in which I concealed myself until the sky became darkened with a heavy rain and a violent thunder-storm, when I stole from my lair, ran across two or three fields, reached a high road skirted with glades and underwood, in the dark shade of which I hurried forwards until I overtook a farmer's cart, into which I climbed, and it was from the driver I first learned that you had settled at Woodcote. The officers, however, had discovered my flight; they had succeeded in tracking me; I heard them in full pursuit; I jumped from the cart; made for the wood, which luckily skirted the road, and, favoured by the darkness of the night, succeeded in effecting my escape, though not without a dangerous fall into a gravel-pit, upon which occasion I must have lost the gold watch, for I missed it shortly afterwards."

"No: it was found in Chubbs's cart."

"I must have dropped it, then, when I clambered in, or when I struggled with the driver for the possession of his whip."

"And if Chubbs hadn't told you, you

would have remained in ignorance of my being at Woodcote?"

"Not altogether; it was confirmed to me by a stranger with whom I subsequently fell into conversation on the top of a stage-coach; but as I was then travelling *incognito*, and his inquiries excited my suspicions, I thought it most prudent to leave him in the lurch as soon as possible. If I am not mistaken, however, I fell in with the same gentleman not long afterwards at Tattersall's."

"Well, well, Sir; I don't want to hear about strange gentlemen. Tell me about your wife. How came she to leave the mad-house in which you had placed her?"

"To that point I was just coming. A letter from the keeper having apprised me that she had escaped from his custody, and was supposed to have been drowned in the Severn, I hurried immediately to the spot, and, from the inquiries I made, had every reason to conclude that she was indeed no more! She had stolen out of the house in the dusk of evening, had made her way to the river, stepped upon a pile of floating timber

moored to the bank, proceeded to its further extremity, and walked into the water, not as if designing to throw herself in, but as if totally unconscious of her own actions. An old waterman, the sole witness of this occurrence, who saw her struggling for a moment with the waves, expressed his perfect conviction of her being drowned, since he presently lost sight of her; and as her shawl and bonnet were washed ashore, at some distance lower down, I did not entertain a moment's doubt of her death. No wonder, therefore, that I could not believe my own eyes, that I was utterly astounded when I again beheld her living. How she got ashore I cannot imagine."

"Nor can I tell you, unless it was by means of another float of timber, for they are numerous in that part of the Severn near which you found her. It was in a lone empty house, to which the poor creature had doubtless wandered for shelter, for she had neither shawl nor bonnet, and her clothes were wringing wet. Trotman—(that fellow's always right!)—said she must have been in

the Severn. You may be thankful, Sir, that she fell into my hands, and so am I. But surely you must have seen some of the advertisements about her which I inserted in the county papers."

"Not one; I quitted Gloucestershire immediately, and none of its papers ever fell in my way."

"But the keeper of the madhouse must have seen them. How can you account for his silence?"

"I was always in arrears with him—we had quarrelled at our last interview—he had repeatedly insisted upon her being removed—he had discovered enough of my character to be apprehensive that she might be altogether thrown upon his hands, and perhaps thought himself justified, under these circumstances, in disclaiming all knowledge of her. He told me, I remember, that he had already been a heavy sufferer in this way."

"Glad the fellow didn't claim her. Much better in my hands than his. Well, Sir, go on with your story."

“Believing myself now to be in a situation to contract a second marriage, I thought it not unlikely that my fashionable appearance, and my assumed name of Captain Harcourt, might procure me another monied wife; an object in which, for a few days, I imagined myself upon the point of succeeding. An accidental encounter in Russell Square bringing me acquainted with a girl who represented herself as a great heiress, I prevailed upon her to elope with me; but at the railway-station she met an acquaintance, from whom, and from her own confession, I learnt that the biter had been nearly bit, that she was the portionless daughter of a house-agent with a large family, and I therefore lost not a moment in decamping. The gentleman to whom we were thus both indebted is the same, if I mistake not, who interrogated me on the top of the coach, and whom I again saw yesterday in your parlour.”

“What! Allan Latimer? Odd enough—odd enough! But they couldn’t arrest you for that, Sir. What has all this to do with

your being taken up on such a heavy charge, and imprisoned in Gloucestershire gaol?"

"You desired a full account of my life since we parted; you commanded me to tell the whole truth, and I am doing so; but I will hasten to the misfortune which has placed me in this perilous and disgraceful situation. Having occasion to visit one of my subordinate accomplices, who had found his way into the infirmary at Chatham, he drew my attention to the very remarkable resemblance between myself and one of the patients in the same ward. This man might easily have passed for my twin brother, and what rendered the likeness still more close and extraordinary, was a wound he had received during his service in the navy, which, though it had left a more serious scar than mine, was precisely in the same place. The surgeon of the house, whom I casually questioned respecting him, told me that the poor fellow's complaint was quite incurable, though he might possibly linger on for a few weeks, or perhaps months."

“ Pondering upon these circumstances as I returned to London, I devised a scheme of fraud much more daring and extensive than any upon which I had hitherto ventured, and lost no time in adopting the preliminary measures for its execution. I engaged a small furnished house at Richmond, on the door of which the name of Captain Harcourt was conspicuously painted; my confederate took another; we lived in a most respectable manner for a few weeks, after which I went to an office in London, and proposed to insure my life for three thousand pounds, referring to the aforesaid friend for the customary certificate as to his knowledge of my life and habits. This he forwarded to the office, as well as a document signed by the first physician of the place, testifying that I was in good health, which he had forged under my dictation—for I always left the ticklish part of such proceedings to others. The insurance was effected, and my accomplice was employed to watch the state of my *fac-simile* in the Chatham infirmary. He did not die so soon as we could

have wished, but still I had not very long to wait : his complaint carried him off ; and on the very day that he was buried we proceeded to the next stage of our plot. My colleague and another friend rowed themselves in a wherry to Richmond ; they dined with me : as the night was setting in they returned to the landing-place, affecting to be tipsy, and drawing the attention of the watermen by their uproarious conduct. Contrary to the advice of the bystanders, I got into the boat, declaring that I would accompany them to London to see them safe home. Before we reached Fulham it was quite dark, when they set me secretly ashore, rowed against the piers of the bridge, upon which they jumped, purposely overturned the wherry, which they suffered to drift with the tide, and then bawled lustily for assistance. Upon being taken off by some boatmen who soon came to their aid, they pretended to be in agonies of distress for their dear friend Captain Harcourt, who couldn't swim, and who must infallibly be drowned. Early next morning the boat

was found keel upwards—but no Captain Harcourt. My friends were of course inconsolable, but they did all they could ; they offered a reward for the recovery of the body, and inserted an account of my melancholy death in the papers.”

“But what were you to get by all this planning and plotting, since you were not drowned, but alive and hearty?”

“Grant me your patience, Sir, and you shall hear. The body of the dead sailor, being disinterred on the very night of his burial, was conveyed in a sack, under cover of the darkness, to a house in an obscure alley of the city, where it was arrayed in the clothes that I had worn when I left Richmond, care having been taken to put my ring upon one of the fingers, and to insert into the pockets everything that might establish my identity ; after which it was carried in a boat to Fulham, and, before the morning broke, was thrown into the river. The reward offered for its recovery ensured its being speedily found, and my confederates took care to be present, in order to prevent

the pockets from being rifled. It was carried to a public-house at Chelsea—an inquest was held—my afflicted friends gave evidence upon oath as to its being the body of Captain Harcourt, as well as to the circumstances of his death—a verdict was returned accordingly—a public burial took place, my friends acting as chief mourners, and the sailor's body was a second time committed to the earth. The coroner gave his certificate of the verdict, the clergyman of the burial: all was regular; not a doubt of my death was entertained in any quarter. I had previously made a will, leaving the policy to a woman who passed as my wife, and who had latterly taken the name of Harcourt, to which indeed she was as well entitled as myself. The will was proved, letters of administration were taken out, and the legacy duty was paid."

"And a pretty set of rascals you were, to be sure! What! had she actually received the three thousand pounds?"

"Not then. By the terms of the policy the payment was not to take place until six

months after the death of the party assured."

"And where were you all this time? You would hardly venture to show your face in London?"

"Certainly not. Immediately after my supposed death, I disguised myself as a Quaker, and proceeded to Gravesend: from which place I embarked stealthily on board an American vessel bound to New York; and there I remained until the time for payment was at hand, when I returned to England. The money was shortly afterwards received by my pretended widow; the spoil was divided among us all, in the proportions originally agreed upon,—the lion's share being, of course, reserved for myself. I disguised myself with umbrageous whiskers, and a half-Quakerish style of dress; resumed my proper name of Simon Holmes; and being really anxious to escape from the precarious and miserable life I had lately been leading, I resolved to appropriate a part of the money to the repayment of the 750*l.* you had lent me."

“ May I inquire, Sir, what rendered you so unaccountably honest all of a sudden ? ”

“ I had great reason to mistrust my confederates, who quickly began to extort more money from me by threats ; I hoped to be reconciled to you ; to live with you :—I believed that the sequestered situation of the Manor-House would effectually prevent my detection ; and if the fraud should be discovered, I trusted that you would generously come forward, and save me from a disgrace that must extend to yourself, for I knew that the insurance-office would be glad to hush up the whole affair, provided the money were refunded. This I thought you would be still more likely to do, if I married and settled at Woodcote ; but, alas ! all my plans have been frustrated by the treachery of the vile and accursed woman who passed for my widow. Not long since she visited me at the Manor-House for the purpose of extorting money ; she has since written to me for more, which I peremptorily and angrily refused, and the infamous wretch, as I learn

from the officers who arrested me, has turned king's evidence."

"Ay, ay, the old story—the instruments of our guilt are made its avengers. How could you expect honour or honesty among thieves and prostitutes? What further villainies have you to confess?"

"None—I have told you everything without reserve; and surely, dear Sir, you will admit that *I* am the least criminal of the whole party. *I* have committed no forgery of documents, *I* have given no false evidence, *I* have been guilty of no perjury, and if I have suffered myself to be deluded by bad company and evil example——"

"Hold your tongue, sirrah! You have sneaked out of the worst danger, as you just now allowed, from fear and cunning, not principle. Bad company, indeed! Your own was the worst that you ever kept. I know not what to believe, what to do; but I will see my lawyer, and write to you."

"Nay, but promise me, before you go," cried the culprit, falling upon his knees, and clasping his hands in a supplicating atti-

tude—"promise me, my friend, my only friend, my dear, dear uncle, that you will—"

"I will promise you nothing !" interposed Brown sternly—"except that I will consult my lawyer. Hands off, Sir, and don't dare to touch me. Whatever may be your fate, you have brought it upon your own head. Ha ! ha !" So saying, he struck the stone floor most energetically with his cane, and strode rapidly away.

Brown's promises were always promptly executed. He saw his solicitor, who wrote to the office in London inquiring whether there was any possibility of compromising their claim, and upon receiving their answer, which was unfavourable, he rode over to Gloucester to communicate it to the prisoner, when he learned that he had been seized with a malignant fever which had suddenly broken out in the gaol, and that it would hardly be safe to see him. Brown gave instant orders for the best medical advice that the town could supply : but all art was vain, the disease was of a fatal nature ; a constitution undermined by dissipated

courses, a spirit prostrated by terror and remorse, accelerated its progress: he expired at the end of a few days.

“Death makes up all quarrels,” said his uncle, “and atones for all transgressions, so far as the living are concerned. Let the poor fellow have a decent burial.” The funeral, which took place at Gloucester, was attended by Brown, Roger Crab, Allan and Walter Latimer. Captain Molloy was invited; but as he had no black coat, he made a point of having a racking toothache, which lasted till the mourners had left Woodcote on their way to the place of interment, when he took advantage of Crab’s absence to go and shoot his rabbits.

Agnes, for by that name must we henceforth designate the lunatic lady, fortunately confirmed the prognostications of her medical attendant. She awoke from her fainting fit, which was of long continuance, in a state of extreme exhaustion, but her intellects, though at first confused, were no longer deranged. “Either I have seen my husband,” she faintly murmured—“or I have had a

strange dream. But why—why did those men seize him?”

“Hush, my dear lady!” said the doctor, who was sitting by her side. “You *have* seen him, but we must not talk about it until to-morrow. For the present I must enjoin silence, though your thoughts may return thanks to God for the restoration of your reason.” The patient slightly started, and would have spoken, but her attendant held up his fore-finger, again whispering the words, “Hush, my dear lady!” a request which was implicitly obeyed, such was the influence he had acquired, by his invariable kindness and gentleness, over all those who were committed to his care. A composing-draught secured refreshing slumbers for the patient, who awoke on the following morning still weak and dejected, but perfectly sane, and eager to gather some further intelligence respecting her husband, and the cause of their leaving Woodford, which seemed to be the last locality distinctly impressed upon her recollection.

For the present the doctor contented him-

self with informing her that her husband had been arrested for debt, but that she herself was in the hands of friends who would take good care of her, promising further information when they should return home. Hastening to Brown's room with the joyful news of his patient's convalescence, he said, "I am beyond measure anxious to complete the cure of this most interesting creature, but it will require care, very great care—we must guard against a relapse—the past occurrences, and the present situation of her husband, must be gradually, very gradually broken to her; and in the mean time her mind, to prevent its preying upon itself, must be occupied and amused. These attentions she cannot receive anywhere so well as at my house, for she has been accustomed to the sight of my wife and daughters, who will gladly devote themselves to her consolation and diversion. You had better, therefore, let her remain with me for two or three months longer, or, at all events, until I can pronounce her perfectly and permanently cured." To this suggestion, the propriety of which he

immediately recognised, Brown gave a willing assent. Towards the middle of the day the carriage was ordered to the door, the doctor assisted his patient into it, and they drove slowly away from the Manor-House, the proprietor of which, who had been requested not to appear, in order that there might be no unnecessary excitement on the part of Agnes, followed the vehicle with his eyes, repeatedly ejaculating, "God bless her, poor thing!" until it was no longer visible.

"My dear Walter!" exclaimed Ellen, running into the parlour where the brothers were singing to amuse their mother, "how fortunate it was that your sudden journey to London compelled us to defer our marriage! It would ever have been a bitter pang to my heart had it taken place without my father's consent; but since this unfortunate affair of Mr. Holmes, his mind is completely changed. I have just been speaking to him on the subject, and he is now quite as anxious for our immediate union as he was lately opposed to it."

"I'm sure, my sweet Ellen!" replied the lover, "that I'm quite as impatient as he can be; and as all our arrangements are already made, our best plan will be to settle it for to-morrow."

"And this lucky delay will enable our dear Allan to be present," added the mother, looking at him affectionately. "And don't you think, Walter, now that the ceremony is to take place publicly, that it would be only right, and proper, and respectful to communicate it to our kind friend Mr. Brown?"

"I quite agree with you, mother," was the reply, "and I will walk over to the Manor-House at once, for there is no time like the time present."

The merchant was too much annoyed and vexed by the recent disgrace of his nephew (for he had only been two days arrested at the period of Walter's visit) to listen very patiently to his detail of his intended clandestine marriage with Ellen, and of the circumstances that now dictated its prompt and public celebration. How-

ever, he said nothing till his visitant had completed his statement, when he bluffly blurted out, "What! does the whole parish want to marry Ellen Molloy? That unfortunate—I mean, that rascally young scamp, Simon Holmes, bothered me about her t'other day. Well, Sir, well—do as you like. It's no concern of mine. Thank God! *I never married!*"

Have we ever mentioned that one of the bells of Woodcote church was cracked? Such was the fact; but on the following morning no one seemed to find it out, for the peal that announced the marriage of Walter and Ellen sounded not less musical than merry to every ear; every face in the whole village was radiant with joy; while the fields looked as bright and gay, and the sky as sunny and happy, as if it were also the wedding-day of heaven and earth. Mrs. Latimer and Allan, Captain Molloy and Matilda, Roger Crab and the friendly Mr. Dawson, the apothecary, were present at the ceremony, which passed off amid grateful smiles and joyful tears, but offered

nothing worthy of special record. Immediately after the nuptials the happy pair proceeded to Gloucester, where Walter had engaged a furnished house, in which he intended to reside until the plans of the family should be definitively arranged.

It has been hinted that Captain Molloy had peculiar and urgent reasons for wishing to expedite the settlement of his daughter, —reasons to which he himself had, more than once, made dark allusion. Of this anxiety the cause now transpired. For some freak more than usually outrageous, he had severely chastised Valentine, who took a most effectual revenge by giving information to the whist-players at Cheltenham of the fraudulent manœuvres by which he had assisted his grandfather to plunder them. A committee was called to investigate the affair, but as the young informer, who had run away from his home, was nowhere to be found, the Captain flattered himself that he would not be forthcoming on the appointed day. Not only, however, did he present himself, but he so completely

succeeded in establishing his charge, that Molloy was called upon to refund his unjust gains, under penalty of being everywhere posted as a notorious rogue and cheat.

Refunding the money being as completely out of the question as refuting the accusation, he suddenly recollected that a friend to whom he wished to make a very particular communication, had recently settled in Australia; it was absolutely necessary to follow him, and as he hated all parade, he decamped one night from Woodcote, without beat of drum, and in a few days embarked, with his daughter Matilda, who had heard that husbands were exceedingly abundant at Port Phillip, on board an emigrant vessel bound for that settlement. That we may not have further occasion to refer to them, we may as well state at once that she succeeded in her object, that she married at last; and that though the husband she has found, and the life she now leads (being compelled to rough it in a new country), bear as little resemblance as possible to the desiderated nabob, and a luxurious residence

at Cheltenham and Bath, she makes a good wife, and is not dissatisfied with her lot.

Of the Captain we cannot render an equally favourable report. Utterly unfitted for the struggles and exertions of a settler, he speedily sunk into idle and disreputable habits, became the Jeremy Diddler of the locality, and gave himself up to smoking and sottishness with an abandonment which has already undermined his health, and threatens, ere long, to terminate his career.

The runaway Valentine, received on board the yacht of an eccentric nobleman, that he might amuse him with his mischief-making and monkey tricks, was brought by those propensities to an untimely end. In order to escape from a messmate whom he had provoked by a most unwarrantable personal joke, he scampered up the rigging with his usual activity, ran along the yards, and had just given the customary shrieking laugh, followed by the exclamation of "Crikey, what fun!" when a sudden lurch of the vessel jerked him into the sea. The

boats were instantly lowered, and every exertion made to save him; but he was never seen to rise to the surface. He died in his vocation.

CHAPTER X.

Two days after the marriage of Ellen and Walter, Mrs. Glossop applied for three weeks' leave of absence, that she might pay the promised visit to her friend Mrs. Jellicoe, at Cheltenham. Most unwilling was her master to grant her request, for she had rendered herself so indispensable to his comfort by her attention to all his habits and peculiarities; the household affairs, under her direction, were so well managed and orderly; she kept such a vigilant watch over the tradespeople, and was so conscientious and accurate in the settlement of the accounts, that he could not bear the thought of her absence, even for the most limited period. As he could not, however, deny the injustice of refusing

her a reasonable indulgence on the very grounds that entitled her to it, he granted her request, and gave her the use of his carriage for her conveyance to Cheltenham. Shortly after her departure Mrs. Latimer and Allan went over to Gloucester, on a visit to the newly-married couple; and at the same juncture Mr. Crab took his invalid wife to Bath, for the benefit of the waters—a concurrence of circumstances which removed from Adam Brown all the parties upon whom he had been accustomed to depend for social and domestic comfort, and for the first time since his arrival in the country “left him alone in his glory.” Such a desertion was doubly trying at the moment when he was not only deeply afflicted by the disgrace and death of his nephew, but felt the loss of his companionship every hour of the day.

Misfortunes never come alone. To all these annoyances were now added a severe attack of his old complaint, the asthma, accompanied with a new one in the shape of rheumatism, and a distressing prostration

of spirits. He discovered, or more probably imagined, that the tradespeople, taking advantage of his housekeeper's absence, were endeavouring to cheat him, which was always a sore trial to his temper; and to complete the catalogue of his misfortunes, the stupid woman who had been engaged as a temporary substitute for Mrs. Glossop, gave him an embrocation to swallow, which ought to have been applied to his rheumatic limb—a mistake which for two or three days made him seriously ill, and increased his irritation almost to madness.

Pondering upon all these troubles and vexations during the time of his convalescence, which, though not long, appeared interminably tedious; and casting in his mind how he might best prevent the recurrence of, at least, some portion of his recent annoyances, he formed a very important, and yet not a very unusual resolution.

Like many other sapient old bachelors, who pass through life, from youth to age, sneering with contemptuous pity at such of their friends as happen to commit matri-

mony, shrugging up their shoulders with a knowing chuckle when they hear of any conjugal squabbles, and sarcastically thanking God that *they* never married, Adam Brown determined to—marry his house-keeper! To him there appeared fewer objections to such a proceeding than might have presented themselves to many others. Of very humble origin himself, he cared nothing for the artificial distinctions of birth and station; the opinions of society, so far as regarded class observances and conventional forms, he had always set at nought; he found himself, in the decline of life, not only without a companion or a friend, but without any claimant for the fortune which it had cost him so much toil and trouble to accumulate: Mrs. Glossop might not supply all these deficiencies, but he had now ascertained beyond all possibility of doubt, that she was absolutely necessary to his comfort; there was no way to secure her but by marrying her; and what was the use of his wealth and his independence if he could not choose a wife where he liked?

Self-willed and hasty, he had no sooner formed this resolution than he became impatient for its accomplishment, and on the very day of Mrs. Glossop's return communicated his intentions to her. "*Mon Doo !*" she exclaimed in utter amazement ; "surely, Sir, you cannot be speaking *au naturel*. You're only joking, I'm sure, just for a *vive la bagatelle*, for you never could think of going to demean yourself in such a manner." When her master convinced her that he was perfectly in earnest, Mrs. Glossop, who was a truly conscientious woman, pointed out to him the disadvantages which such a union would be likely to entail, declaring that the world would ridicule it, and universally pronounce his condemnation for thus lowering himself. This was said in all honesty of purpose, without the most remote thought of provoking his antagonistic spirit ; but it produced that effect nevertheless. He snapped his fingers defyingly, in order to indicate his respect for the opinion of the world, and pressed his suit, or rather indicated his

determined will, with so much decision, that Mrs. Glossop, thinking she had said everything required by her duty to her master, whom she sincerely respected, and that she was not bound any longer to oppose his wishes and her own advancement, signified her consent, and expressed her gratitude with many low curtseys; and thus Adam Brown, the confirmed old bachelor, came to be married at last.

Upon the particulars of this incongruous union, which was celebrated without delay, it is not our purpose to dwell. Nothing occurred to signalize the nuptials, except that Brown made a present of a new bell to the church, to replace the damaged one, and occasioned an unusual quantity of laughter and ridicule throughout the whole neighbourhood by his selection of such an extraordinary bride. Scarcely had the honeymoon expired when both parties began to suspect that their marriage had been a mistake. The *ci-devant* housekeeper still wished to be bustling about, as usual, among the pots, preserves, and saucepans of the

housekeeper's room and the kitchen ; but Brown, though he cared not a rush what menial occupations he pursued himself, was fine and fastidious in the person of his wife, and prohibited in the most peremptory manner all such indulgences, as inconsistent with her present station. He was determined to show that she could be a lady, and so she was, as far as idleness went,—but no further. She could not sit quiet all day, dressed up very fine, and twiddling her thumbs, without feeling miserably bored. Competent to do almost anything, but quite unable to do nothing, her bustling cheerfulness gave way to a lethargic moping ; she felt herself to be in a false position,—completely out of her element.

A low woman thus craving for stimulus and excitement might have betaken herself to spirituous liquors ; Mrs. Brown had recourse to spiritual dram-drinking. When at Cheltenham she had repeatedly accompanied her friend to the chapel of a Mr. Griffin, one of those presumptuous, fanatical

anathematisers "who deal damnation round the land," who conciliate the weak, and timid, and selfish portion of their flock by promising them the very best places in heaven; and the malignant by assuring them that all the friends and neighbours who do not adopt their own precise tenets, shall be doomed to the very lowest pit of the infernal regions. By dint of perpetually decrying this sinful world and all its luxuries, Mr. Griffin had succeeded in surrounding himself with all the luxuries he condemned. Of this ascetic preacher Mrs. Brown became a disciple, finding such pleasant excitement in his furious denunciations, and in the society of her friend Mrs. Jellicoe, who might almost be termed the high-priestess of his temple, that she was constantly driving over to Cheltenham to attend his preachings and lectures, never failing, upon such occasions, to load her carriage with the choicest produce of the garden and farm.

Brown had looked forward to the possession of a companion who would cheer his

solitude and inoccupation by sharing a game of cards or cribbage, or billiards, by reading amusing books to him, for his own eyes began to fail, by accompanying him to the rustic cricketings and merry-meetings, as well as to the social parties of the neighbourhood, or by occasionally driving over to Gloucester to see a play; but from these recreations his wife recoiled with horror—they were all denounced by the Rev. Mr. Griffin as sinful and damnable. It was vexatious enough that she should forego these innocent amusements in her own person, but when she began to condemn her husband if he indulged in them, and to threaten him with eternal perdition if he did not abandon them, Brown waxed wroth, and told her, in no very measured terms, that he insisted upon being the master of his own house, adding, that if she didn't like it, she might leave it. No one knew better than herself that he was a person whom it was difficult to guide, and almost impossible to coerce, especially by a menace; she entertained a sincere respect for his character;

she was truly grateful for the position in which he had placed her; and as she was really a good sort of woman, it might have been thought that she would have held it a duty to contribute to the happiness of his life, instead of rendering it wretched by waging with him an incessant warfare of household persecution. Morality, however, never becomes so thoroughly perverted as when it is in alliance with superstition, and none are so likely to prove unfeeling, and even unprincipled, as weak-minded people who are at the same time conscientious. Such was the case with Mrs. Brown: a false standard of duty led her away from the true one; there was a right meaning even in her wrong actions; and if she made her husband miserable in this world, it was with the pious intention of preventing his being so in the next.

A coarse joke of Brown's fanned these threatening embers of conjugal difference into a flame. Long and frequently had he been tormented by his wife to attend Mr. Griffin's chapel; steadily, and sometimes

rudely, had he refused. That reverend gentleman had found that he could not mortify the flesh for a course of years, and in his own peculiar way, with impunity; his macerations must have been confined to the spirit, for his body had become exceedingly corpulent. "You would not speak to me in this un-Christian language," said Mrs. Brown, after some taunting reproach of her husband, "if I could only once prevail upon you to sit under the saint—the Reverend Mr. Griffin."

"Believe you there!" was the reply; "never speak again if I was to sit under such a great fat porpoise as that;—squeezed as flat as a pancake. Had you there, Madam. Ha! ha!" The speech itself, the triumphant rap of the cane, the chuckling laugh, the shake of the shoulders, were too much, even for the pious Mrs. Brown. An insult to herself she could have endured with resignation, nay, with pleasure;—but to ridicule that dear saint!!—it was intolerable! A fierce altercation ended in an agreement to separate,—a proposal so ac-

ceptable to both parties, that it was carried into immediate execution : the time that had elapsed from the morning of their ill-assorted marriage being exactly three months !

Apportioning the sum rather to the station from which he had taken her, than to his own fortune, Mr. Brown settled three hundred a year upon his wife, who went to live with her friend Mrs. Jellicoe at Cheltenham, devoting nearly half her income to the dear, corpulent saint, who is thus furnished with additional reasons for decrying the pomps, vanities, and luxuries of this sinful and miserable world.

Immeasurable was the relief afforded by this separation to the mind of Brown, who, though he was peremptory, detested wrangling, and whose own liability to depression of spirits made him especially hate a moping and austere companion. Habitual gloom and causeless complaints of the world's misery he deemed a sinful ingratitude towards God ; and while he condemned his wife for her offences of this nature, he could not help thinking that she had been equally deficient

in duty towards himself, her greatest earthly benefactor. Most annoying was it to him also to feel that his marriage had been a mistake, a false move, a bad speculation; for though he cared little for the judgment of others, he did not like to stand impeached and convicted in his own.

On the very morning after the final departure of his wife, a new direction was luckily given to his brooding thoughts, and a fresh occupation furnished for his active mind, by the appearance of the medical gentleman under whose care Mrs. Holmes had been placed. "Allow me, Mr. Brown, most sincerely to congratulate you," were his first words, as he cordially shook the merchant's hand. "My letters will have apprised you that my charming patient, although still dejected in spirits, is completely restored to mental and bodily health, nor have I any longer the least apprehension of a relapse. The painful tidings of her husband's death were gradually communicated to her: she believes him to have been solely arrested for debt; of the disgraceful

circumstances attached to his career she knows nothing whatever; for he himself, profligate as he was, seems to have entertained such a reverence of her purity and high character, as always to have concealed from her his misdeeds. In that ignorance I would recommend that she should still be kept, and never exposed to any unnecessary excitement."

"You think, then, that she may safely be brought back to the Manor-House?"

"I thought so a month or two ago; but to tell you the truth, my wife, my daughters, and myself were all so much delighted with her society, that we could not bear to part with her. A more delightful, sensible, and accomplished person I never encountered. She is passionately devoted to music, and is exceedingly fond of female society, in both of which, if she becomes an inmate of the Manor-House, I could wish you frequently to indulge her."

"If she becomes an inmate!" cried Brown; "to be sure she will. Where else should she go to? Am I not her uncle by

her marriage? I'll order the carriage immediately, and bring her home this very day."

So much was Agnes improved in appearance by the complete restoration of her health and reason, so lovely, so interesting did she look in her widow's weeds, that Brown did not at first recognise her, and when he did, he was so completely overcome with surprise and joy, that his eyes became suffused with tears. "God bless you, my dear niece!" he exclaimed in a tremulous voice, as he repeatedly and affectionately kissed her; "how happy am I to see you so wonderfully improved! Ods bobs! you will make your old uncle as proud as a peacock. Come along! come along!—they can send your rattletaps after you. I sha'n't feel comfortable till I get you back to the Manor-House."

That he might not lose a single day in carrying into effect the doctor's recommendation, Brown called next morning upon Mrs. Latimer, who had just returned from Gloucester, inviting her and Allan to come

and spend a fortnight at the Manor-House, that they might assist in entertaining the poor lunatic lady. "Beg her pardon," he cried, correcting himself—"no more lunatic than I am. I mean my niece, my dear Agnes. Zooks, Madam! you wouldn't know her again—at least I didn't—quite an altered creature. Why, Allan, my boy! how much better *you* are looking too! Ay, ay, we shall be all happier, all healthier, all looking better now. Master of my own house again. Ha! ha!" There were good grounds for this improved appearance in Allan. His native air and the society of his family had, as he predicted, soon restored the healthy hue of his cheek; the work of fiction upon which he had been diligently employed for some months had enabled him, by its sale, to replace the sum abstracted from the joint stock of himself and his brother; time and constant occupation had mitigated the sense of his recent mistakes and disappointments; and he had received several most gratifying letters from Isola, couched in terms of the warmest

friendship for her dear brother, as she still called him, and exuberant with an impassioned gratitude to Heaven for her own unalloyed felicity. Everything had succeeded to her utmost wishes. Her husband's father, not only reconciled to her marriage, but delighted with it, when he heard of the fifteen thousand ducats, had gladly given up the business, which was flourishing even beyond their expectations. Camillo had bought the little cottage which had belonged to her mother in her native island of Ischia, whither they retired with their boy, whenever they could make holiday, or snatch a short respite from professional occupations. Whether at Naples or at Ischia, she seemed to be equally happy. Her letters were the outpourings of a soul steeped in thankfulness and joy.

Mrs. Latimer, upon whose maternal eye visions of Allan's renewed adoption by Brown already began to dawn, eagerly accepted the invitation to the Manor-House, where their society and good offices contributed so manifestly to the solace and the

cheer of Agnes, that, at the expiration of the fortnight, they were pressed to protract the term for a month. Both had found so much pleasure in the companionship of Agnes, and in witnessing the daily development of accomplishments and mental stores previously unsuspected, that they gladly assented to the proposal. Between Allan and Agnes there was an especial sympathy that drew them instinctively towards each other. Both had bruised spirits which found a congenial consolation in the same subjects and pursuits; both being passionately fond of music and of literature, they sang or read together, selecting such graver strains as were adapted to their present temperament. At the end of the first month thus pleasantly occupied, the visit of the Latimers was renewed for another, and this successively for several more, until Brown, finding his own comfort as well as that of Agnes mainly dependent upon their stay, insisted upon their giving up the cottage, and becoming his permanent inmates. Walter and his wife made frequent visits also to the Manor-

House, both of them winning such huge favour in the sight of its master, that he never suffered them to depart without exacting a promise of a speedy return.

As it is the just punishment of maleficence to excite a painful hatred of those whom we have injured, so is it the merited reward of good actions to awaken in us a love of those whom we have benefited. Deeply did Allan feel this gratification as he marked the cheering effect of his kindly offices and attentions upon Agnes. Each had begun by commiserating the other, and the affinity between pity and love is so well known, that we need hardly state the result. From motives of delicacy, however, Allan did not make any formal declaration of his wishes until Agnes had thrown aside her widow's weeds, when he tendered her his hand and heart, and having obtained her blushing consent, proceeded to solicit that of Brown. "What, my dear boy!" was the reply: "and so you are tired of single-blessedness, are you? Well, Sir, you have chosen the

most charming woman in all England, and I give you my consent with all my heart and soul. I must say, however, that *I* never thought of marry——Hallo, though! don't tell lies, you old fool!—you *did* think of marrying, and a pretty business you made of it!"

Walter Latimer's employer having died, and the business being given up, he and his wife were invited to come over to the Manor-House, and to consider themselves its permanent inmates, and a portion of the family. On the morning of Allan's marriage—for he too was married at last—Brown placed in the hands of Agnes a deed of gift of five hundred a year, and at the same time deposited a similar instrument in the work-box of Ellen Latimer, gallantly observing that it was a very inadequate payment for the pleasure he anticipated from their society. These hopes were so abundantly justified, that he makes no secret of his intention to bequeath the remainder of his fortune between the twin brothers.

Unbroken was the concord—great and unalloyed the happiness of the whole party thus domesticated at the Manor-House. Adam Brown, whose inmates took especial care to keep him incessantly occupied, busied himself about his farm, toddled round his grounds and gardens, was driven to visit his neighbours, and to participate in all the amusements of the vicinity ; he played billiards, whist, and cribbage ; he heard the newspapers, especially the Public Ledger, regularly read to him, and often imagined himself to be enjoying the society of Allan and Walter, while they sat silently beside him on the balustraded platform of the roof, until he had smoked himself into a state of complacent and oblivious drowsiness. Such is the force of habit, that whenever he heard of any approaching nuptials, he would begin to blurt out his usual cackling triumph at his being a bachelor, on which occasions he would suddenly check himself, turn very red in the face, and mutter, as he walked away with a confused look,—“ Don’t tell lies,

Adam Brown, don't tell lies! Done a wiser thing, perhaps;—made a better speculation if you had married at first, instead of waiting till you were an old man, and an old fool, and then getting married at last."

THE END.

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